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Children and armed conflict

Report of the Secretary-General

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to Security Council presidential statement (S/PRST/2006/48), by which the Council requested me to submit a report on the further progress in the implementation of resolutions 1612 (2005), 1379 (2001), 1460 (2003) and 1539 (2004). In accordance with the Council's request, the report includes information on compliance in ending the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict in violation of applicable international law and other grave violations being committed against children affected by armed conflict.[1] The report also includes information on progress made in the implementation of the monitoring and reporting mechanism; information on progress made in the development and implementation of action plans (called for in para. 7 of resolution 1612 (2005)); and information on the mainstreaming of child protection in United Nations peacekeeping operations.

2. Pursuant to Security Council resolutions 1379 (2001), 1460 (2003), 1539 (2004) and 1612 (2005), the report covers compliance in ending the recruitment and use of children and other grave violations, including the killing and maiming of children, rape and other sexual violence, abductions, denial of

[1] Applicable international law relating to the rights and protection of children in armed conflict include, in particular, the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and obligations applicable under the Additional Protocols thereto of 1977, the Convention on the Rights of the Child of 1989, the Optional Protocol thereto of 25 May 2000, and the amended Protocol II to the Convention on Prohibitions or Restriction on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects, International Labour Organization Convention No. 182 concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour and the Ottawa Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction.

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humanitarian access to children and attacks against schools and hospitals by parties to armed conflict.

3. The preparation of the present report involved broad consultations within the United Nations, in particular with the Task Force on Children and Armed Conflict at Headquarters, country-level task forces on monitoring and reporting, peacekeeping and political missions and United Nations country teams, as well as with concerned Member States and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Country-level task forces on monitoring and reporting, peacekeeping and political missions, and United Nations country teams are the primary sources of information for the report.

4. References to reports, cases, incidents, and so on in the present report refer to information that is gathered, vetted and verified for accuracy. In situations where access to, obtaining or independently verifying information received is hampered by factors such as insecurity or access restrictions, it is qualified as such.

5. Pursuant to Security Council resolution 1612 (2005), in identifying the situations that fall within the scope of her mandate, my Special Representative for children and armed conflict was guided by the criteria for determining the existence of an armed conflict found in international humanitarian law and international jurisprudence.[2] In the performance of her mandate, my Special Representative has adopted a pragmatic and cooperative approach to this issue, with a humanitarian emphasis, focusing on ensuring broad and effective protection for children exposed and affected by conflict in situations of concern. Reference to a situation of concern is not a legal determination and reference to a non-State party does not affect its legal status.

II. Cross-cutting issues of concern

6. Recruitment of children and internal displacement are closely linked, such as in Colombia, as too often displacement becomes the only avenue left for families in certain areas to avoid their children's recruitment by armed groups. On the other hand, evidence suggests that refugee and internally displaced person camps are often prime recruiting grounds for child soldiers owing to the convenient concentration of vulnerable children. The lack of security around these camps is said to be an important factor that increases the likelihood of child recruitment. During the reporting period, there have been reports that the Karuna faction have abducted and recruited children from internally displaced person camps in Sri Lanka. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, children have been recruited from internally displaced person camps in North Kivu Province by forces loyal to rebel leader Laurent Nkunda during the recent upsurge in violence.

7. The movement of armed groups across borders to recruit children from refugee camps continues to be alarming. Along the Sudan-Chad border, both Sudanese and Chadian armed groups are recruiting children from Sudanese refugee camps in eastern Chad, while Chadian refugee children are being recruited by Sudanese rebel groups in Darfur. Since January 2007, there has also been a surge in the recruitment and use of Congolese and Rwandan children in North Kivu from refugee camps and communities in Rwanda by forces loyal to Laurent Nkunda, as well as Ugandan

[2] See, for example, common article 2 to the four Geneva Conventions of 1949, article 1 of Additional Protocol II of 1977 thereto; J. Pictet, editor, *Commentary to the IV Geneva Convention* (1958), p. 20; and *Tadic*, IT-94, International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia Appeals Chamber, 2 October 1995.

children from the Democratic Republic of the Congo-Uganda border areas. The transportation of vulnerable children by both the Government and rebel groups across borders during armed conflict constitutes one of the worst forms of child trafficking.

8. Girls, and sometimes boys, are targeted with various forms of sexual and gender-based violence, including rape, during armed conflicts. The perpetration of sexual violence against children by State and non-State parties to conflict is prohibited by international humanitarian law and is a violation of human rights. In Darfur, rape is a method of warfare used by armed groups to deliberately humiliate and to force displacement of girls and their families. In the Great Lakes region, especially in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Burundi, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights indicated appalling levels of sexual and gender-based violence. For example, 60 per cent of the cases recorded in Kisangani, northern Democratic Republic of the Congo, involved victims between the ages of 11 and 17. It is imperative that perpetrators of acts of rape and other sexual violence which leave a long-term, devastating impact on the victims are prosecuted in accordance with the gravity of such crimes. The recent decision of the International Criminal Court to open an investigation in the Central African Republic on allegations of rape and other sexual crimes committed in the context of armed conflict between the Government and rebel forces is an important step towards that end.

9. Increasingly, we are also encountering cases of children being detained for alleged association with armed groups in violation of international standards, for example in Burundi, Colombia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Iraq, Israel and the Philippines. Many of the detained children are subjected to ill treatment, torture, forceful interrogation and deprivation of food and education. The children also lack recourse to prompt and appropriate legal assistance, and usually are not separated from adults. In certain situations, some of these children have been used as guides and informers for Government military operations, usually under coercion. During the reporting period, some children have been released owing to United Nations advocacy efforts, such as in Burundi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo; however, many children remain in detention centres, local prisons, interrogation centres and holding camps.

10. Systematic and deliberate attacks on schoolchildren, teachers and school buildings have, since the last reporting period, escalated in certain conflict situations, warranting the increased attention of, and action by, the international community. In Afghanistan, insurgents continue to burn down schools, especially girls' schools, in an effort to intimidate and prevent girls from accessing education. In Iraq, students are also targets of violent crimes and sectarian killings, especially in Baghdad and Mosul. Killings of teachers, closures of schools and children's fear of being abducted have contributed to a dramatic decrease in school attendance rates.

11. Despite the continuing commitment of the Government of Thailand to ensuring children's access to education, of increasing concern are the disruptions in schools experienced in the south of the country owing to violent attacks on schools, children and teachers by armed elements. In March 2007, three students were killed and seven injured in an attack at a boarding school in Songkhla, and five primary school students were injured when their bus was fired at in Narathiwat. So far, 73 teachers have been killed and more than 100 schools have been burned down, including 11 schools in June 2007 alone, in Raman district, Yala Province. Efforts by the

Government to keep educational facilities available for all children in the region are commendable.

12. Since the last reporting period, important precedents have been set to end impunity for crimes against children, particularly the recruitment and use of children by Government forces or armed groups. These include the confirmation of charges by the International Criminal Court against Thomas Lubanga Dyilo, founder and leader of the Union of Congolese Patriots in the Ituri region of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, for the conscription and enlistment of children under the age of 15 and the use of children for active participation in hostilities and the arrest warrants issued by the Court for five senior members of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), including its leader, Joseph Kony, who is charged with 33 counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity, including the forcible enlistment and use of children in hostilities. Furthermore, for the first time, a former head of State, Charles Taylor of Liberia, is undergoing trial in The Hague before the Special Court for Sierra Leone for 11 counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity, including conscripting or enlisting children into armed forces or groups and using them to participate actively in hostilities. Sentencing by the Special Court for Sierra Leone of Alex Tamba Brima, Brima Bazzy Kamara and Santigie Borbor Kanu of the Armed Force Revolutionary Council and the conviction of Allieu Kondewa of the Civil Defence Forces militia for the recruitment and use of child soldiers send an important message that such crimes against children will not be tolerated and that those who engage in the practice will be brought to justice. Notwithstanding international efforts, national authorities must also promptly commence appropriate national prosecutions for grave crimes against children.

13. The use of indiscriminate weapons, such as cluster munitions during attacks in areas of civilian concentration, has a severe impact on civilians, particularly children, even long after the conflicts have ended. In southern Lebanon, for example, children continue to be injured and killed by the large number of unexploded submunitions remaining from the 2006 conflict. It is imperative that a legally binding international instrument be developed to prohibit the use of cluster munitions which cause harm to civilians.

14. There has been less focus on the reintegration of children associated with armed groups than on disarmament and demobilization in post-conflict situations. As the prospects for recovery in most countries also depend on the successful reintegration of these children, peacebuilding efforts should address children's protection and reintegration needs in the initial planning and implementation of peacebuilding operations. Long-term recovery and development programmes, linked to disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, should be community based, in order to provide sustainable and successful reintegration for these children.

III. Information on compliance and progress in ending the recruitment and use of children and other violations against children

15. The present report provides information on developments covering the period from October 2006 to August 2007. Reports on children and armed conflict in Burundi, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Somalia, the Sudan and Uganda were also submitted to the Security Council and its Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict in the reporting period.

16. Progress made by the parties listed in annexes I and II to the present report, and named in the body of my 2006 report (A/61/529-S/2006/826), has been assessed with respect to whether they have ceased recruiting and using child soldiers and whether they have refrained from committing other grave violations against children. Progress made by the parties is also assessed with respect to whether they have engaged in dialogue with the country-level task force on monitoring and reporting or United Nations country teams (as called for in Security Council resolution 1539 (2004)), and whether through that dialogue, or in the context of other processes, such as disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes or the signing of peace agreements, they have developed and implemented action plans to end the use of child soldiers and released all children from their ranks.

17. Parties who fully comply with terms set forth in action plans and undertake verified measures to address all the other grave violations for which they have been cited, to the satisfaction of the country-level task forces on monitoring and reporting or United Nations country teams and the Task Force on Children and Armed Conflict, will be considered for de-listing from the annexes. De-listing does not in any way negate the requirement for continued monitoring of formerly listed parties by the country-level task force on monitoring and reporting or the United Nations country team. Should it be determined that de-listed parties recruit and use children at a later point in time or fail to allow continuous and unhindered access to the United Nations for verification, they will be re-listed onto the annexes and the Security Council alerted to non-compliance.

18. A noteworthy achievement has been realized with the parties to conflict in Côte d'Ivoire, where no new cases of recruitment of children have been recorded since the last reporting period. The Forces armées des Forces nouvelles (now Forces de défense et de sécurité des Forces nouvelles, FDS-FN) and the four armed militias, namely, the Front pour la libération du Grand Ouest (FLGO), the Mouvement ivoirien de libération de L'Ouest de la Côte d'Ivoire (MILOCI), the Alliance patriotique de l'ethnie Wé (APWé) and the Union patriotique de resistance du Grand Ouest (UPRGO) in Côte d'Ivoire have ceased recruitment and taken concerted measures to identify and release children associated with their forces for rehabilitation since signing action plans in October 2005 and September 2006, respectively.

A. Information on compliance and progress in situations on the agenda of the Security Council

Developments in Afghanistan

19. The security situation in Afghanistan has deteriorated during the reporting period, with children continuing to be the victims of the conflict between anti-Government elements, including the Taliban, and national and international security forces, namely, the United States-led Coalition as well as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization-led International Security Assistance Forces (ISAF). Weak governance and judicial system, as well as the inadequate coverage by the Afghan security forces in insurgency-affected areas, have contributed to the lack of protection afforded to children affected by the conflict. Indiscriminate attacks and disproportionate use of force by the Taliban and other armed elements, including the use of car bombs, suicide attacks and improvised explosive devices, directed at national and international forces have caused a high number of child deaths and injuries. Many of these attacks have taken place in densely populated areas or in the

vicinity of popular gatherings. From January to July 2007, there were at least 950 civilian deaths as a result of insurgency-related violence, out of which the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan has documented at least 49 deaths and 19 injuries to children. On 15 June 2007, a suicide attack against an ISAF convoy in Uruzgan Province that was distributing sweets and water to local children resulted in the deaths of four girls and seven boys, aged between 8 and 15 years.

20. Children have also become casualties in military operations against the insurgency, including air strikes by international military forces. Air strikes have in some cases missed their targets and fallen on civilian areas, killing children. On 9 March 2007, nine civilians in Kapisa Province, including four children, were killed in a Coalition military air strike. On 8 May 2007, 21 civilians, including women and children, were reportedly killed in Helmand Province as a result of air strikes that supported ISAF operations. ISAF acknowledged, at the Protection of Civilians Workshop in Kabul in August 2007, that mistakes had been made during operations and informed the United Nations that it continued to adjust operations to minimize civilian casualties.

21. Unexploded ordnance has also caused deaths of and injuries to children during the reporting period. Between August 2006 and July 2007, 295 mine and unexploded ordnance accidents involving children, which account for over 60 per cent of the total number of accidents, resulted in at least 59 deaths.

22. The United Nations remains disturbed by reports of children being used to perpetrate attacks and, in some cases, as human shields by the Taliban and other insurgents. There have been reports that the Taliban have recruited and used children in their activities, such as suicide attacks. This is a relatively new phenomenon, and the United Nations has documented several high-profile cases of children involved in attacks. In February 2007, a boy estimated to be between 12 and 15 years old killed himself and a guard and injured four civilians as he attempted to gain entry to a police station in Khost city, Khost Province. Additionally, a 14-year-old boy was caught wearing a suicide vest on his way to assassinate the Khost provincial governor. No commitments have yet been made by any of these groups to end this practice.

23. Attacks against schools by the Taliban and other anti-Government elements continued, and security incidents affecting schools and threats against students and teachers documented by the United Nations remain a serious concern. Between August 2006 and July 2007, there were at least 133 documented incidents of school attacks. These caused at least 10 reported deaths among students, mainly in the southern provinces. At least 100 attacks in the south were reported in the first six months of 2007. There have been deliberate attacks on female students and women teachers, and girls' schools are particularly targeted. On 12 June 2007, two gunmen killed two schoolgirls and injured six others as they left the Qalay Meadan Girls' School, in Qala-e Saeed Habib area, Logar Province. According to the Ministry of Education, 384 of the total 721 schools in the southern provinces of Helmand, Kandahar, Uruzgan and Zabul are currently closed.

Developments in Burundi

24. The reporting period was characterized by political instability and persistent tensions between the Government and political opposition parties following the President's unilateral Cabinet reshuffle on 13 July 2007. It was equally characterized by the impasse in the implementation of the Comprehensive Ceasefire

Agreement signed by the Government and the armed rebel group Forces nationales de libération (FNL)-Agathon Rwasa on 7 September 2006. Children continue to be associated with FNL. The ongoing recruitment of children by the two factions of FNL-Agathon Rwasa and the smaller break away Jean Bosco (Gateyeri) was of serious concern. However, the FNL-Jean Bosco (Gateyeri) faction is now defunct. From October 2006 to July 2007, 85 cases of recruitment of children were reported throughout the country, with 60 cases occurring in the months following the signing of the Comprehensive Ceasefire Agreement. The upsurge in recruitment by FNL was allegedly aimed at enhancing their bargaining power should further peace negotiations take place, and enabling them to claim increased financial benefits during the demobilization and reintegration phases. Some 48 of the 60 children were students from Gashasa, Rumonge, Marangara and Gashikanwa, in the Bururi and Ngozi Provinces. Most of those children have been released or have defected from FNL ranks owing to the stalled implementation of the Comprehensive Ceasefire Agreement and resulting delays in the distribution of demobilization benefits. On a positive note, 26 children, aged 14 to 18 years, who were previously detained in the former demobilization camp in Randa were released in March 2007 and reintegrated with their families and communities prior to the visit of my Special Representative.

25. The detention of children remains a concern. Progress has nevertheless been achieved during the reporting period, with the release of some children arrested for association with FNL. From October 2006 to July 2007, 49 cases of detention of children accused of participation in armed groups have been reported, notably in the provinces of Bujumbura Mairie and Bujumbura Rural. That represents a 35 per cent increase in such cases since the last reporting period. Many of them had been incarcerated for several months without trial or legal assistance. More than 65 children, held in the Mpimba prison in Bujumbura owing to their former association with FNL, were released in March 2007.

26. As a result of the ceasefire, the number of children killed and maimed in armed clashes between members of the armed forces (Forces de défense nationale (FDN)) and FNL from September 2006 to August 2007 decreased by 30 per cent in comparison with the last reporting period. A total of 40 cases of children killed and maimed by FDN and FNL was reported, with 80 per cent of the victims killed by grenade explosions during looting operations. On 11 December 2006, five children were killed in Taba, Gitega district, when three FDN soldiers threw a grenade into their residence.

27. Rape and other sexual violence against children by members of FNL and some members of the Security Services is also of great concern. More than 30 such cases were reported during the period, 80 per cent of which involved girls. On 6 January 2007, a 4-year-old girl was raped by an FDN soldier in Mugongomana, Bujumbura district. On 19 February, a 16-year-old girl was raped by FNL elements in Nyanza-Lac, Mkamba district.

Developments in the Central African Republic

28. There have been numerous reported cases of recruitment of children by the Union des forces démocratiques pour le rassemblement (UFDR) rebel group, which controls parts of north-eastern Central African Republic. During UFDR attacks on the positions of the Government Forces armées centrafricaines (FACA) and French Army in Birao on 3 and 4 March, some of the rebels were identified as former students of the Birao governmental secondary school. Many of the children, between the ages of 12 and 17 years, who participated in these attacks, were killed.

Further, two out of three schools were partially destroyed by FACA and UFDR following the attack.

29. On 16 June, a tripartite action plan between UFDR, the Government of the Central African Republic and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) for the reduction and elimination of the recruitment and utilization of child soldiers and their demobilization and reintegration was signed, following which the first group of approximately 200 children were symbolically released. Earlier, in April and May, over 450 children associated with UFDR, 75 per cent of whom were boys aged 13 to 17 years, were demobilized. All these children have since been reintegrated into their families and communities. Approximately 75 per cent of the children had participated in military operations and combat for a sustained period, averaging from nine months to a year, while some had been with armed groups, later associated with UFDR for three years. Ten per cent of the children are as young as 10 years old and were used mainly for logistical support during UFDR operations in 2006 and 2007. It is claimed that the last remaining group of 450 to 500 children had been released to their communities as at September 2007, although this had not yet been verified by the joint Government-UNICEF-UFDR monitoring structure established under the tripartite action plan.

30. A UNICEF mission in June 2007 also confirmed that there were approximately 400 to 500 children, including girls, associated with the rebel groups, the Armée populaire pour la restauration de la démocratie (APRD) and Front démocratique pour le peuple centrafricain (FDPC), both active in the north-western region. APRD and FDPC are increasingly resorting to forced recruitment of children in their areas of influence. In March and again in June 2007, APRD requested for assistance from the United Nations country team to demobilize child soldiers in its ranks. Although informal dialogue with APRD to prevent recruitment and to demobilize and reintegrate children associated with its ranks is under way, formal negotiations are hampered by insecurity in the north-western region.

31. Reprisals by FACA IN villages suspected of assisting rebels in areas such as Bemal-Boguila, Kabo, Batangafo and Kaga-Bandoro have resulted in massive displacement, death and injury among the civilian population, particularly children. During the reporting period, UNICEF and United Nations partners recorded approximately 1,389 houses, 7 schools and 3 health centres partially or completely destroyed, torched or looted in the areas of Kaga-Bandoro and Ouandago and 203 houses, 2 schools and 1 health centre destroyed in the areas of Kaga-Bandoro and Dekoa.

32. Owing to the heavy presence of rebel groups in the areas of the Batangafo-Kabo-Ouandago "triangle", there has been a 75 per cent increase in sexual and gender-based violence reported, compared with the number of cases reported in 2006. According to UNICEF, 15 per cent of women and girls in the northern region of the country have been raped. United Nations partners also report that between Batangafo and Bokamgaye, many young girls are forcibly taken as wives for rebels and forced to perform sexual favours in exchange for movement across the numerous checkpoints set up by these rebel groups.

Developments in Côte d'Ivoire

33. Following the signing of the Ouagadougou Political Agreement on 4 March 2007 between President Laurent Gbagbo and Secretary-General of the Forces nouvelles, Guillaume Soro, the "zone of confidence" separating the rebel-held North

and the Government-controlled South was dismantled, creating a new momentum for the peace process.

34. During the reporting period, there was no substantiated evidence of active recruitment and use of children by armed groups. The United Nations has been able to regularly monitor the association of children with fighting forces as part of the implementation of action plans agreed with FDS-FN and four armed militias, namely, FLGO, MILOCI, APWé and UPRGO. FDS-FN renewed its commitment to the action plan to put an end to such association of children with their forces. On 26 January 2007, FDS-FN submitted a letter to UNICEF requesting support to complete the implementation of the action plan, followed by the immediate action by FDS-FN to complete the identification of remaining children associated with their forces. On 14 August 2007, FDS-FN submitted a report to my Special Representative for Côte d'Ivoire detailing action taken to finalize the implementation of the action plan, where 85 children, including 27 girls, were identified.

35. Similarly, the four militia groups have worked closely with the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire, UNICEF, the newly integrated command centre, which is responsible under the Ouagadougou Agreement for the disarmament and demobilization phases of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process and the Programme national de réinsertion et de réhabilitation communautaire (PNRRC), which oversees the reintegration programmes, to implement their commitments under the action plan, which included the designation of focal points by the militias. In April 2007, the focal points began the process of identifying children associated with their forces in Guiglo, Toulépleu, Bloléquin, Tai, Zagné, Duékoué and Bangolo. This resulted in the identification and registration of 204 children, including 84 girls, all of whom are now being assisted through UNICEF programmes.

36. As it has been determined that the FDS-FN and the four militia groups have implemented the action plans and continue to allow unhindered access to the United Nations to monitor compliance, they shall be removed from the lists annexed to my report this year. However, the country-level task forces on monitoring and reporting, supported by a verification commission, will continue to monitor the groups' compliance with the action plans, to ensure that continuous efforts are made to prevent the recruitment and use of children and greater emphasis is accorded to the rehabilitation and reintegration of children who have been released.

37. While there has been a decline in reported cases of killings, children continue to lose their lives as a direct result of the conflict environment. Many of the killings are not investigated, and the perpetrators, who may be private members of the community or uncontrolled elements of the various armed groups, are rarely identified. Incidents of rape and other grave sexual violence against children also remain alarmingly high, particularly owing to the prevailing culture of impunity. The Government and FDS-FN have been slow to undertake any rigorous and timely investigations to prosecute the perpetrators.

Developments in the Democratic Republic of the Congo

38. There has been a decrease in the number of cases of recruitment of children in the reporting period, which can be attributed to several factors, including the progress made in the implementation of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme for children, the army integration process, the decrease in the number of active fighting zones and persistent lobbying by child protection

networks against the recruitment of children. Despite this overall trend, all the parties to conflict listed in my 2006 report (A/61/529-S/2006/826) continue to recruit, use and abduct children. The presence of children in the Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo (FARDC) integrated and non-integrated brigades remains high, particularly in the Ituri district and the two Kivu Provinces. In South Kivu, the presence of at least 25 children, including girls, among the ranks of FARDC integrated 3rd and 8th brigades has been documented. On 4 January 2007, following the fighting in North Kivu in November 2006, the Government reached an agreement with rebel commander Laurent Nkunda, allowing for the *mixage* (integration) of Nkunda's troops with FARDC units. The *mixage* resulted in the de facto presence of many children among the ranks of the new FARDC mixed brigades and their use for active combat against the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda (FDLR). Despite the agreement, Nkunda and troops loyal to him rebelled at the end of August 2007, and fighting with FARDC troops resumed. An increase in child recruitment by Nkunda and forces aligned with him has been reported since. Several schools in the area have also been closed owing to attempts by Nkunda elements to forcibly recruit students.

39. Reports also indicate that increased recruitment activities were carried out in North Kivu, as well as in Rwanda and Uganda, prior to and throughout the *mixage* process. This surge appears to be linked to the strategy of commanders loyal to Laurent Nkunda to increase the number of troops to be mixed and the strength of forces prior to engaging in combat operations against FDLR and the Mai-Mai in North Kivu. Children who escaped or were separated indicated that recruitment was ongoing in the returnee settlements of Buhambwe, Masisi territory, the Kiziba and Byumba refugee camps in Rwanda, in the towns of Byumba and Mutura in Rwanda and in the town of Bunagana on the border between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Uganda. On 29 January 2007, a 16-year-old boy from Uganda stated that he had been forcibly recruited along with five other Ugandan children in Bunagana by Adjudant chief "Eric" and Major Janvier, who operate under the command of Colonel Saddam of the 836th battalion, loyal to Laurent Nkunda. Following his recruitment, the boy, together with other newly recruited children, was taken to Mushake for the *mixage* of the FARDC Charlie Brigade. As at 30 August 2007, 13 Congolese children recruited in the refugee camps in Rwanda and 17 Rwandan children, 11 recruited in Rwanda and 6 recruited in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, had been separated from the FARDC mixed brigades. In addition, a group known as the Association des jeunes refugiés congolais, reportedly linked to Laurent Nkunda, had been actively recruiting Congolese ethnic Tutsi children and young people in the Kibuye camp since July 2006.

40. In May 2007 the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) undertook a joint assessment visit with the Rwandan authorities to the refugee camps in Rwanda to verify reports of child recruitment and devise protective and responsive mechanisms, such as enhancing sensitization of the refugee community with more involvement by the local authorities, improving the control of exit of children from the camps and ensuring that those accused of recruiting children were charged and brought to justice. The Rwandan Government has undertaken an investigation following the recruitment of eight children from the Kiziba refugee camp on 24 July 2007, allegedly for deployment to South Kivu. The outcome of the investigation is pending.

41. In Ituri, although numbers are lower than in the previous reporting period, child recruitment by the Front des nationalistes et intégrationnistes (FNI) and the Front de résistance patriotique en Ituri (FRPI) continues. In particular, during the

third phase of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process in Ituri, which began on 4 August 2007, more than 40 children were reportedly re-enrolled by forces loyal to Peter Karim Udaga. Although 2,900 ex-combatants had been demobilized as at 16 August 2007, it is estimated that FNI, FRPI and the Mouvement révolutionnaire congolais (MRC) still have 1,500 elements, including children, that did not surrender. FNI has also been responsible for actively obstructing the separation of children during the disarmament process.

42. Mai-Mai groups still active in North and South Kivu continue to use children. There are reports of child recruitment by Colonel Abdou Panda, former commander of the 121st Mai-Mai brigade based in Lubarika, Ruzizi Plain, South Kivu. In December 2006, 107 children were released from his group at the *brassage* centre of Luberizi. In May 2007, the presence of 30 children, including girls, among the Mai-Mai group Baleine, under the command of Colonel Jackson, was reported in Bingi, North Kivu. Further, owing to the recent phase of conflict in North Kivu, recruitment of children by Mai-Mai groups has also escalated. In August 2007, more than 50 children have been recruited by Mai-Mai groups in Nyamilima, Rutshuru territory, North Kivu. There are also reports of children being held by Mai-Mai groups in Katanga and Maniema Provinces.

43. A decrease in the number of incidents involving the killing and maiming of children was recorded during the reporting period, in comparison with the preceding year. However, children continue to be victims of attacks and clashes between FARDC integrated and non-integrated units, armed groups in Ituri and FDLR in North and South Kivu. In an incident on 26 and 27 May 2007, the killing of 17 people, including 8 children, and the wounding of at least 28 people, including 21 children, was reportedly committed by FDLR/Rasta in the villages of Nyalbuze, Muhungu and Chihamba in South Kivu.

44. Despite all the initiatives undertaken by the Government to counter sexual violence, including the adoption of two national laws on 20 July 2006, the number of incidents of rape and other sexual violence against children remains extremely high. From October 2006 to July 2007, 10,381 survivors of sexual violence, 37 per cent of whom are children, were identified by United Nations partners in the eastern region of the Democratic Republic of the Congo; a 4 per cent increase since the previous reporting period. In a one-year period until June 2007, at least 1,400 child victims of rape and other sexual violence were registered and received assistance from the United Nations and its partners in South Kivu alone, where the main perpetrators include elements of FARDC, the police and armed elements of FDLR.

45. A total of 4,182 children, including 629 girls, were separated from armed forces and groups in the eastern region of the Democratic Republic of the Congo in the reporting period. In Ituri, 2,472 children, including 564 girls, were separated from MRC, FRPI and FNI militia forces and 10 boys were separated from Mai-Mai forces in the remote area of Opienga, Oriental Province; in North Kivu, 1,374 children, including 52 girls, were separated primarily from mixed brigades loyal to Laurent Nkunda and FARDC and Mai-Mai militia forces; and in South Kivu, 336 children, including 13 girls, were separated primarily from Mai-Mai militia forces and troops associated with Laurent Nkunda.

Developments in Haiti

46. It should be noted that, pursuant to Security Council resolution 1780 (2007), the Council recognizes the grave violations committed against children affected by the armed violence in Haiti and requests their continued protection, as set out in

resolution 1612 (2005). Following military operations by the Haitian National Police (HNP) and the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) since December 2006, as well as the arrest of several gang leaders and the dismantling of armed entities, security conditions have improved, especially in areas affected by armed violence, such as Cité Soleil and Martissant in Port-au-Prince. These armed entities vary in organizational structure, activities, motivation and degree of political affiliation. According to MINUSTAH, although these groups are currently essentially criminal in nature, their character and motivations may shift between criminal and political depending on the specific time and circumstances and may pose a threat to peace and security.

47. The situation of children in areas under the influence of armed entities is critical. However, it has been challenging to ascribe definite responsibility for violations to specific parties owing to a large number of actors involved, fragmentation of groups and the difficulty of distinguishing the identity of one group from another. However, the United Nations at the country level has reliable information that the parties named below have been involved in the recruitment and use of children.

48. During the reporting period, there were confirmed reports that children have been used as messengers, spotters, attackers and porters to transfer and hide weapons, as well as for kidnappings. Moreover, children have been directly targeted as a group. In February 2007, Base de Bois-Neuf, controlled by Belony Pierre in Cité Soleil, used two boys, aged between 8 and 10 years, to ignite gas tanks near the "Blue House" occupied by MINUSTAH troops. Also in Cité Soleil, United Nations sources observed that Base de Boston, controlled by Evens Jeune, used children in various capacities as outlined above. On 11 July 2007, a 17-year-old boy, suspected of being a group member, was arrested by HNP in Grand Ravine, Martissant, an area under the control of Base Galil, headed by Wilkens Pierre, and Armée Ti-Machèt. In Gonaïves, a 16-year-old boy associated with the group Raboteau, controlled by Winter Étienne and Ferdinand Wilfort, was arrested by HNP and his weapon confiscated.

49. In the reporting period, 12 children, including a girl, were killed and 8 children, including 4 boys and 4 girls, were injured in Cité Soleil and Martissant. In Gonaïves, four children were killed and five injured in deliberate attacks by armed entities. In December 2006, three girls, aged 13, 14 and 16, were shot in Raboteau. In the same month in Raboteau, a 13-year-old girl was injured by a gunshot and then burned alive; and on 19 July and 5 August 2007, two boys, including one 10-year-old, were decapitated in Ouanaminthe and Mirebalais areas, respectively. Armed entities in Cité Soleil have also used schools as bases during the armed confrontations with MINUSTAH forces at the end of January and the beginning of February 2007.

50. There were approximately 119 cases of child abductions in the reporting period. Although the majority of these cases occurred in Port-au-Prince in 2006, an increasing number of cases were reported from the regions in 2007. In the autumn of 2006, some students were specifically targeted by kidnappers. The situation deteriorated on 13 and 14 December 2006, when 30 students between the ages of 13 and 15 years, were abducted while travelling on school buses near Cité Soleil.

51. Gang rape and other sexual violence against girls and women are still extensively perpetrated by groups in Cité Soleil, Martissant and Carrefour Feuilles. Owing to the lack of official and aggregated data, the number of cases reported is indicative of a larger phenomenon of sexual violence against girls in Haiti.

According to a United Nations partner, approximately 100 cases of child rape were registered from October 2006 to January 2007. Among these, a 3-year-old girl was raped by armed men from Cité Soleil on 9 November, and two cases of rape allegedly perpetrated by members of Evens's group were registered in January 2007. From January to June 2007, it was reported that 54 children, 10 of whom were victims of gang rapes, were raped by members of armed and criminal entities. On 7 May 2007, a 15-year-old girl was raped by six armed men of Bois Neuf, and on 10 May 2007, a 17-year-old girl was raped by six armed men in Grand Ravine, controlled by Base Galil.

Developments in Iraq

52. The prevailing security situation makes obtaining information on violations against children increasingly difficult. Most of the available information is extracted from a wide range of different sources but can rarely be sufficiently verified. It remains clear, however, that Iraqi children suffer most in the ongoing violence. Statistics from United Nations partners and Iraqi authorities suggest that approximately half of all Iraqi refugees are children, as are as many as 38 to 40 per cent of internally displaced persons.

53. There are some indications of children being recruited as combatants by non-State armed groups, such as insurgency organizations. A recent concern is the reported new tactic by insurgent group militias, Al-Qaida and Al-Qaida-affiliated groups, of using children as decoys in suicide car bombings. On 21 March 2007, reports described an incident in which two children were used to facilitate the passing of a car with explosive materials through a Multinational Forces in Iraq (MNF-I) checkpoint in the al-Shaab neighbourhood of Adhamiya district in north-eastern Baghdad. The car was then blown up with the children inside, killing five people, including the two children, and injuring seven others. A MNF-I spokesperson confirmed the incident. MNF-I has publicly reported that insurgents in Anbar Province have been using children to plant roadside bombs and act as spotters for detonation teams. On 21 March 2007, a 14-year-old boy on a bicycle reportedly detonated his suicide vest on an Iraqi police patrol in central Haditha, killing three policemen. Owing to ongoing security operations under the "Baghdad Security Plan" as well as the increasing use of children by insurgents, the number of children, aged between 12 and 17 years, in MNF-I detention has significantly increased, from less than 300 in December 2006 to almost 800 in August 2007, with some 30 children alleged to be active insurgents. These children are provided with education programmes and vocational training.

54. Sectarian violence, fuelled by insurgent and militia action and various criminal gangs throughout the reporting period, has claimed large numbers of civilian lives, including children. There are as of yet no reliable figures on the number of child casualties, although reports of killing and maiming of children are received almost daily. Victims of indiscriminate mortar shelling of residential areas or of bomb attacks, the latter often in the form of devastating suicide car bombs, include many children. As a result of insurgent mortar attacks, five children died in their school in Adil, western Baghdad, on 28 January 2007; three children in Khan Bani Saad on 23 May 2007; and two children in Samarra on 7 August 2007. On 22 May 2007, insurgent gunmen in Iraqi army uniforms killed a family of six, including four children, at a fake checkpoint. On 6 August 2007, a truck bomb in Al-Qebbek, north of Tal Afar, killed 28 persons, including 12 children.

55. Reports of civilians being killed or injured during MNF-I military operations such as house searches or air strikes are becoming more frequent. On 22 February 2007, at least 12 civilians, including 2 to 4 children, were allegedly killed in a gun battle between insurgents and MNF-I forces followed by MNF-I air strikes in Ramadi. Three children in Fallujah were killed on 2 June 2007, when MNF-I allegedly opened fire on a group of individuals believed to be planting a bomb. Many more civilian casualties of military operations were reported, but the age of the victims was rarely confirmed.

56. The education system in Iraq has been adversely affected since the sectarian violence began following the attack on the al-Askari shrine in Samarra on 22 February 2006. Since that attack last year, more frequent attacks on schools, children and teachers have been recorded. UNICEF estimates that at least 30 per cent of Iraqi children are not currently attending school. A particularly disconcerting incident was the deliberate targeting by armed insurgents of the al-Khulud Secondary Girls School in western Baghdad on 28 January 2007, resulting in the deaths of 5 students and 21 injured. In another targeted attack against a school, on 18 June 2007, insurgent gunmen entered a secondary school in Saydiyah, where boys were taking their exams. Approximately 30 students, aged between 17 and 19 years, were abducted. Furthermore, in developments that mirror incidents in Afghanistan, extremists, mainly in Diyala Province, have repeatedly burned or destroyed school buildings: on 15 May 2007 in Abu Ghraib, Baghdad; and on 6 June, 20 June and 21 June 2007, in or near Baqubah, possibly meant as an attack against secular education or schooling for girls.

57. Schools have also become "collateral damage" during fighting between insurgents and MNF-I forces. On 8 May 2007, an attack by an MNF-I helicopter against suspected insurgents in the village of Al-Nedawat, Dujala Province, reportedly killed and injured six children. Local police reported that the helicopter was shot at from the ground and when it fired back, hit the school.

58. The Government has, through the Commission of Child Care, begun to address the challenges confronting children in Iraq. The Commission has designated a committee, which has recommended that the Government sign the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict. The Government has repeatedly called upon the international community and all relevant United Nations system agencies to offer their support and assistance in reinforcing their efforts in securing and protecting the welfare of children in Iraq.

Developments in Lebanon

59. There are no reports of recruitment of children by the regular armed forces. Both Prime Minister Fouad Siniora, on behalf of the Government of Lebanon, and Parliamentary Deputy Mohamed Raad, on behalf of Hizbullah, informed my Special Representative during her mission to Beirut on 12 April 2007 that Lebanon would ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict, and not use children for armed violence or political mobilization.

60. Civilians, including several thousand children and family members, were caught in the fighting in the Palestinian refugee camp of Nahr el-Bared, northern Lebanon, which lasted from 20 May to 2 September 2007. It is estimated that the fighting between the Lebanese Army and the armed extremist group of Fatah al-Islam resulted in 40 Palestinian civilians killed and over 200 injured, including

children. There are reports of use of Palestinian children by Palestinian armed factions and groups in the Palestinian refugee camps.

61. The extensive and unprecedented use by Israel of cluster bombs during the 2006 conflict left southern Lebanon severely contaminated with approximately 1 million unexploded submunitions and general unexploded ordnance. This continues to pose one of the most serious threats to children in southern Lebanon. From the cessation of hostilities on 14 August 2006 until 31 August 2007, 4 children have been killed and 66 injured as a result of unexploded munitions. On 24 and 25 December 2006, five children, aged 13 to 15 years, from Hanaway and Kaakaeyet al-Jiser, were injured by unexploded cluster bombs while playing. Israel has yet to provide the much-needed strike data on the quantity, types and location of the cluster bombs that were dropped.

Developments in Myanmar

62. The Government, through its Committee for the Prevention of Military Recruitment of Underage Children, has undertaken some efforts to address the issue of the recruitment and use of children, including the recent inclusion of preventing the recruitment of child soldiers in their national plan of action against trafficking. Furthermore, written law states that participation in the Government armed forces (Tatmadaw Kyi) is entirely voluntary and that the minimum age for recruitment is 18 years. However, reliable reports from United Nations partners indicate that forcible attempts to recruit children for Tatmadaw Kyi are still taking place. It is difficult to systematically verify the extent of recruitment or the number of children in military camps owing to access limitations. Lack of proper birth certification and local-level connivance in falsifying existing registration information also perpetuate the difficulty of verifying child recruitment.

63. Since 2005, the United Nations country team has received periodic updates from the Government on the activities of the Committee, including information on children being discharged from army service and, most recently, on disciplinary measures taken by the Government against recruiters who have violated Government recruitment policies with regard to minors. The United Nations country team, however, cannot verify the written information provided by the Government concerning disciplinary action taken against perpetrators, even though it has sought working-level interface on numerous occasions.

64. During the recent mission of my Special Representative, who met with acting Prime Minister and Secretary One of the State Peace and Development Council, the Government agreed to cooperate in the establishment of a monitoring and reporting mechanism on child rights violations within the framework of Security Council resolution 1612 (2005) by appointing the Director-General of the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement as the Government focal point on issues relating to the implementation of resolution 1612 (2005). The Government also agreed to provide the details of actions taken against army recruiters who recruited children and the list of children discharged for follow-up verification by the United Nations country team. At the time of writing, the United Nations country team had just received from the Government a list of children discharged.

65. The Government also agreed in principle to engage in an action plan with the United Nations country team and UNICEF that meets international standards. This would include the establishment of a subcommittee for the reintegration of former child soldiers; a transparent complaints procedure for incidents of recruitment of children, including instituting disciplinary measures against parties responsible for

aiding and abetting recruitment of children; access to recruitment centres by the United Nations country team and UNICEF on a regular basis to verify whether or not children are present; regular child protection training for Tatmadaw Kyi officials; and a public campaign, including at the village level, to create awareness of the rules, regulations and modalities of a complaints procedure to prevent recruitment. It is noted that in parallel with the above, a supplementary understanding was agreed between the Government and the International Labour Organization (ILO) in February 2007 providing a complaints mechanism in respect of allegations of forced labour, under ILO Convention 29, which encompasses forced recruitment and underage recruitment.

66. The United Nations has not received any reports of new recruitment and use of children by the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) and Karenni Army (KA), the armed wings of Karen National Union (KNU) and Karenni National Progressive Party (KNPP) respectively, during the reporting period. However, the Government's limitations on United Nations access to areas of operations and on dialogue with KNLA and KA hamper efforts to verify whether those groups have ceased the recruitment and use of children. As a follow-up to letters received by my Special Representative in the last reporting period from KNU and KNPP, dialogues with both parties were initiated by the United Nations, which resulted in KNU and KNPP signing deeds of commitment to halt and prevent the recruitment and use of children on 6 April and 13 April 2007, respectively. Under the deeds, the parties also commit to allow the independent monitoring of violations, demobilize and release children in their ranks and facilitate the provision of appropriate physical and psychological recovery and social reintegration assistance by United Nations system agencies and NGOs for the released children. However, owing to the concerns of the Government, further discussions to finalize arrangements on the implementation of these action plans are ongoing.

67. There are reports indicating that a breakaway faction of KNU, the KNU-KNLA Peace Council, has recruited children from the Mae La refugee camp, as well as from villages in the border areas. Sources suggest that several boys were deceived into crossing the border by promises of pay and participation in celebrations but were subsequently coerced into joining the armed group. While most of the children have returned, four boys are reportedly still missing. It is not known whether the KNU-KNLA Peace Council continues recruitment, and the United Nations has not been able to verify the reports of recruitment. Furthermore, there are reports of a "one child per family" recruitment policy by the Kachin Independence Army (KIA). In early 2007, the United Nations verified a report of a 15-year-old girl recruited by KIA when she returned to her home village from school in Myitkyina, Kachin State. To date, the girl remains with KIA.

68. There are also eyewitness accounts of children present within the ranks of the United Wa State Army (UWSA) in northern Shan State, despite their recent statement to my Special Representative that children are no longer recruited since the ceasefire agreement with the Myanmar Government. UWSA, however, agreed to further discussions to engage in an action plan to separate and reintegrate children associated with their forces.

69. There are reports of the Shan State Army-South recruiting children as part of a new mandatory recruitment policy. Children are also recruited and used by the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (Kokang) in northern Shan State. There is also information that children are present in the ranks of the Karenni National People's Liberation Front (KNPLF) and Democratic Karen Buddhist Army

(DKBA). However, in-depth monitoring is hampered by access limitations to areas of operations of these groups.

70. Government restrictions on humanitarian access to communities in conflict-affected areas continue to seriously hamper the delivery of aid to those affected, particularly children. Civilians in these areas, including children, are allegedly subjected to systematic human rights abuses by members of the armed forces. Ongoing Government offensives in these areas against ethnic armed opposition groups, such as KNLA and KA, have resulted in many deaths, the destruction and looting of villages and schools, the mining of trails and the displacement of thousands of people. The Minister for National Planning and Economic Development, U Soe Tha, had committed to my Special Representative during her recent mission that the Government would facilitate humanitarian access and operations in those affected areas, within the monitoring and reporting framework of Security Council resolution 1612 (2005).

71. United Nations partners have highlighted the issue of former child soldiers imprisoned by the Myanmar authorities for deserting the Tatmadaw Kyi. The United Nations is also aware of cases involving former child soldiers in the refugee camps in the region for whom some services and case management have been provided on an ad hoc basis. However, proper and systematic mechanisms to identify former child soldiers in the refugee camps in the region do not exist and thus it is not possible to conclusively state the number of cases.

Developments in Nepal

72. The Comprehensive Peace Agreement signed between the Seven Party Alliance (SPA) and the Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist (CPN-M) in November 2006, as well as the separate Agreement on Monitoring and Management of Arms and Armies signed in December 2006, prohibit both parties from recruiting or using persons under age 18. They also set out phased plans for the registration of Maoist combatants and the discharge of persons born after 25 May 1988 from the Maoist Army. By January 2007, more than 31,000 Maoist personnel were cantoned and enumerated in 28 sites across the country. In July 2007, the second stage registration of Maoist combatants began and is still under way. The registration should lead to the automatic discharge of all those aged under 18 years at the time of the May 2006 ceasefire. The United Nations Mission in Nepal (UNMIN), with the participation of UNICEF and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), has finalized the verification at three cantonment sites in cooperation with CPN-M. Verification at other cantonment sites continues. No official release of children has taken place to date. The Government is making the necessary preparations to release and rehabilitate combatants who are under age 18, as provided for in the Comprehensive Peace Agreement.

73. With the end of active conflict, there has been a significant decrease in reports of grave violations of children's rights. Reports of violations by the Government's security forces have seen a particularly marked decrease, and large recruitment drives by CPN-M have come to an end. The Nepal country-level task force on monitoring and reporting documented over a thousand cases of children recruited by CPN-M and its affiliates between October and December 2006. Many of those children ended up in Maoist Army cantonments, and over 300 were released without follow-up or official documentation after spending a few days at these sites. Since January 2007, four cases of recruitment by the Maoist Army have been documented. Two of the children involved have since left the Maoist Army. There were also no

new cases of arrest under the Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Control and Punishment) Ordinance (TADO) reported. TADO expired at the end of September 2006 and was not renewed. Most children arrested under TADO during the conflict were released.

74. Militias linked to the CPN-M and the Nepal Army are no longer operational, but many personnel from the CPN-M, the Maoist Army and the militia have joined the Maoist Young Communist League (YCL), which was re-established in December 2006. Some of those joining YCL are under age 18. YCL carries out social programmes, as well as activities that parallel those of the security forces, aimed at enforcing laws or punishing social crimes. The presence of children in YCL and youth wings of other political parties is a cause for concern because of the deep politicization of children and youth during the conflict. The exposure or involvement of these children and youth in the violent demonstrations that are a feature of political action in Nepal is also disconcerting.

75. The period of unrest in the Terai region of southern Nepal has also resulted in the deaths of seven children during the reporting period. Four children were killed by the police force and one by CPN-M during demonstrations. In January 2007, a 15-year-old boy was killed by CPN-M at a roadblock established by the Madhesi People's Rights Forum (MPRF) in Siraha district, eastern region. In a separate case, a 17-year-old girl associated with a CPN-M cultural group was one of 27 people killed in March 2007 during a confrontation between CPN-M and MPRF in Gaur and surrounding villages, Rautahat district. YCL claimed that the girl was a member of their organization. Many more children were injured during public rallies between December 2006 and February 2007.

76. Although the use of schools for military purposes has decreased with the end of the conflict, 40 incidents of inappropriate use of schools were reported between October 2006 and June 2007, with 25 of the 40 occurring in the mid-western region. In 13 incidents, CPN-M used school grounds to train their cadres; in 22 incidents, schools were forced to accommodate political or cultural programmes by the CPN-M party and sister organizations such as YCL and the All Nepal National Independent Students' Union-Revolutionary; and in at least six incidents, affecting over 200 schools, students were forced to participate in gatherings of CPN-M and its sister organizations. Schoolteachers have been abducted and assaulted, mostly in the Siraha and Saptari districts. Two such incidents were committed by CPN-M and YCL, and approximately six incidents were allegedly committed by two factions of Janatantrik Terai Mukti Morcha (JTMM), namely, JTMM-Goit and JTMM-Jwala Singh.

77. There are also serious concerns regarding the Government's commitment to ending impunity and ensuring accountability for serious human rights violations. An increasing number of reports indicate that the Nepal Police refuse to register or investigate serious crimes committed during and after the conflict. The Government believes that the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, as referred to in the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, will address the issues of ending impunity, if and when established.

Developments in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and Israel

78. The situation of Palestinian children in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, remains grave, with continued Israeli military operations, incursions and raids throughout the territory, in addition to an escalation in internal hostilities resulting in intense fighting between rival Palestinian factions. During the

reporting period, a total of 106 Palestinian children were killed in the Occupied Palestinian Territory; 58 per cent of whom were killed by the Israel Defense Forces (IDF). Seventy-four per cent of child deaths caused by IDF occurred in the Gaza Strip, mostly during military operations and artillery shelling. From 1 to 7 November 2006 alone, eight children were killed during the Israeli incursion, code-named "Operation autumn Clouds", into Beit Hanoun in the northern Gaza Strip.

79. A total of 24 per cent of the 106 Palestinian children were killed as a result of factional violence in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Armed clashes between the Palestinian Executive Security Forces (ESF) and Al-Aqsa Brigades in Khan Younis on 26 January 2007 killed a 5-year-old Palestinian child. On 7 February 2007, an 8-year-old Palestinian boy died of wounds sustained when he was caught in armed clashes between ESF and the Presidential Guards of the Palestinian Authority in Bureij refugee camp.

80. A total of 323 Palestinian children were injured during the same period, 64 per cent of whom were injured by IDF in the West Bank, 10 per cent by IDF in the Gaza Strip, 7 per cent by Israeli settlers in the West Bank, 3 per cent in factional violence and 3 per cent owing to the reckless handling of explosives.

81. Five Israeli children, four living in Sderot and one in Kibbutz Karmiya near Ashkelon, were injured by Qassam rockets fired from the Gaza Strip by Palestinian militants in the reporting period. Furthermore, two schools and one kindergarten in Sderot were damaged by home-made Palestinian rockets in May, July and August 2007.

82. Documenting the recruitment of children by Palestinian armed groups remains a challenge, and the extent of the phenomenon is not well known. Although there is no evidence of systematic attempts to recruit children for training or operations, militiamen from at least one Palestinian armed group have approached boys outside their school in Gaza requesting them to join paramilitary training. On 2 August 2007, the case of a 13-year-old boy recruited by Hamas militants in Gaza was reported. The boy had been asked by Hamas to monitor the streets and gather information on drug dealers and collaborators with Israel. On 30 August 2007, IDF soldiers on an anti-terror patrol in the northern Gaza Strip spotted a 16-year-old boy who was carrying two explosive devices intended to be detonated in a suicide bombing attack against them. In April 2007, during the mission of my Special Representative to the Middle East, Palestinian President Abbas and then Foreign Minister Abu Amr agreed to revive the code of conduct among Palestinian groups not to involve children in political violence, and to engage with UNICEF to devise a plan of action to prevent the use of children in such violence.

83. Reports also suggest that Shabak, Israel's security agency, continues to seek to recruit Palestinian children to be used as collaborators inside prisons or upon their release. Data are extremely difficult to gather owing to the reluctance of child detainees to talk about these issues, especially while still in detention, and the lack of systematic monitoring. However, at least one case involving a 16-year-old boy was reported in 2007. Furthermore, IDF continues to force civilians, often minors, to enter potential zones of conflict before the soldiers in order to clear the area or limit casualties, although the Israeli Supreme Court has ruled that practice to be illegal. Four cases of Palestinian children used by Israeli soldiers have been documented in 2007. In two separate incidents on 25 February 2007, during military operation "Hot Winter" in Nablus, an 11-year-old girl and a 15-year-old boy were forced at gunpoint to walk in front of Israeli soldiers into houses which were

thought to shelter militants. The children were physically coerced into carrying out searches for the soldiers. In another incident, during a military incursion into the Balata refugee camp on 11 April 2007, two boys aged 14 and 15 were assaulted and forced to sit on the bonnet of an Israeli jeep while youths were throwing stones at the jeep. These incidents are currently being investigated by IDF.

84. There were five cases of abduction, involving 10 children, registered by the United Nations during the reporting period. Four cases occurred in the Gaza Strip, one attributed to Palestinian armed groups and three to IDF. Another case was carried out by Israeli settlers in the West Bank. On 17 June in the Tal al-Hawa area of Gaza, three children aged 11 to 16 were abducted by masked militants of the Preventive Security Forces, who accused them of collaboration with Hamas. The children were held at gunpoint and interrogated. They were released after a few hours.

85. Schools and hospitals continue to be attacked or occupied by both IDF and Palestinian armed groups, in some instances resulting in the killing or injury of children. There were at least 10 incidents where IDF soldiers attacked schools (both Palestinian Authority and UNRWA schools). In five of those attacks, Israeli soldiers used tear gas and sound bombs or stun grenades inside the schools. On 18 November 2006 in an UNRWA-run school in Beit Lahia, two students, aged 7 and 12, were shot and injured inside the school by IDF. In a separate incident in the West Bank, on 5 March 2007, IDF soldiers stormed the UNRWA-run Al-Jalazoun Basic Boys' School and Basic Girls' School and opened fire at students, injuring two in the head. In Gaza, Palestinian militants stormed several schools, and in three of those attacks, hand grenades were used. Damage to at least three schools or school property during fighting were reported.

86. At any given point during the reporting period, between 361 and 416 Palestinian children were being held in Israeli prisons and detention centres, including children as young as 12 years. Between 10 and 22 of those children were being held in administrative detention without charge or trial. The majority of prisoners were boys, while approximately 11 girls had been detained or were serving terms of imprisonment during this period. Over 90 per cent of children arrested, interrogated and charged before the military courts were convicted and sentenced to a term of imprisonment. There are reports that some children held in detention undergo physical beatings and psychological torture, including threats of sexual violence. The systematic transfer of Palestinian child prisoners outside the Occupied Palestinian Territory into Israel is in direct violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention.

87. An expert paper commissioned by a United Nations body found that the most serious consequence of the barrier and its associated regime, and its damaging humanitarian ripple effect, is an increasing occurrence of forced internal displacement, violations of associated rights and induced poverty. A total of 390 civilian structures were demolished during the reporting period, 117 in Gaza and 273 in the West Bank, leaving at least 1,842 people displaced, 717 in Gaza and 1,125 in the West Bank. The majority of affected persons are children. The denial of passage or delays at checkpoints has significantly affected the access of civilians, particularly children, to medical care and services, causing serious threat to their physical health. The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs reports that from October 2006 to August 2007, there were a total of 442 incidents of ambulances reporting delays or denied access at Israeli checkpoints in the West Bank. In addition to home evictions and house demolitions, other causes of forced

displacement are settlement expansion, restrictions on water and land use and restrictions on movement.

Developments in Somalia

88. Reports indicate that both the Union of the Islamic Courts (UIC) and the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) recruited and used children during intense fighting for control of Mogadishu in November and December 2006. UIC publicly declared its intention to recruit from schools, and appointed Sheikh Fu'aad Mohamed Khalaf to be in charge of training the students. An intensive recruitment campaign of boys and girls under age 18 by UIC and its allied militias took place from schools in Mogadishu in that period. TFG militias as well as some clan militias have been widely reported to be using children to carry arms. In January 2007, a senior United Nations official visited Mogadishu and was an eyewitness to children training at Belidogle airport, where TFG has a military base. Since June 2007, however, the TFG administration in Jowhar has begun to release children from its ranks, and activities are being planned to reintegrate these children into their communities, with support from UNICEF. In August 2007, the Minister for Women's Development and Family Affairs agreed to play a role in an advocacy campaign to release children from TFG armed forces and prevent future child recruitment.

89. During the reporting period, violence between the TFG and Ethiopian forces on the one hand and insurgent groups, including the Al-Shaabab, remnants of the former UIC elements and Hawiye clan militia on the other, has resulted in high civilian casualties in Mogadishu. Precise numbers of casualties among children are difficult to verify owing to insecurity and the lack of access, but estimates from United Nations partners indicate that in Mogadishu alone, there have been over 1,200 deaths and several thousand civilians injured since October 2006, of which approximately 35 per cent are children. In April 2007, the security situation in Mogadishu deteriorated, as anti-Government factions began staging hit-and-run attacks and using improvised explosive devices and suicide bombings against the TFG and Ethiopian forces. Those forces retaliated with indiscriminate exchange of fire and shelling, sometimes using untargeted rocket launchers. Many of these attacks occurred in residential areas of the city, resulting in disproportionate numbers of children killed or injured. On 1 February 2007, mortars launched into a settlement for internally displaced persons in Talex village killed seven people, including three children; on 29 July 2007 three teenage boys were injured by a roadside bomb in Towfiq district; and on 26 August 2007, a roadside explosion killed two children on their way to school in Gupta district.

90. Rape and other sexual violence committed by the parties to the conflict have not occurred systematically. However, between January and June 2007, the heightened violence has rendered women and girls, particularly among the internally displaced, more vulnerable to sexual violence and attacks. There have been several cases of girls raped while fleeing Mogadishu, mostly along the road to Afgoye and Baidoa. In four of those cases, verified reports identified the perpetrators as men dressed in the uniforms of the TFG militia. Another incident in May 2007 involved TFG militias stopping a minibus at a checkpoint and raping eight women and five girls. These violations have gone unpunished to date.

91. In July and August 2007, reports indicated a wave of raids on schools by TFG forces in Mogadishu, allegedly in search of extremist elements. On 26 July, TFG forces stormed into a school near KM 4 Junction and abducted 4 teachers and

20 students. Several hospitals, including the Al-Hayat and Al-Arafat hospitals, were also raided or attacked with mortar rockets in April and May 2007, disrupting medical services and forcing patient evacuations. More recently, on 18 August, mortar shells from fighting between the TFG and Ethiopian forces and insurgents hit the SOS Hospital in Mogadishu. Furthermore, it has been reported that Ethiopian forces occupied the Mohamoud Ahmed Ali secondary school for military purposes between April and July.

92. Incidents of mine and unexploded ordnance accidents resulting in deaths and injuries among children increased in 2007. Between January and June in southern Somalia, there were more than 28 landmine accidents, killing 8 children and wounding 10; and 33 incidents involving bombs or unexploded ordnance, killing 25 children and wounding 46. A particularly serious incident occurred on 6 July 2007 in central Mogadishu, where a piece of unexploded ordnance exploded, killing eight people, including five children.

93. The insecurity and the multiple checkpoints along main roads have affected humanitarian organizations in and around Mogadishu and, more generally, in south-central Somalia, leaving staff unable to access communities in urgent need of assistance or protection. Humanitarian workers, human rights defenders and media have also been targeted in various security incidents and killings throughout the country, and offices and assets have been destroyed. On 15 May 2007, gunmen attacked the office of the World Health Organization, wounding a guard in the process; and on 27 June, two staff members of the International Medical Corps were killed by gunmen in El-Berde town. On 4 August, staff from an international NGO on an assessment mission in Dhobley, Lower Juba, were ambushed by unknown men, resulting in one person killed and two others injured.

Developments in the Sudan

94. The overall situation in Southern Sudan has improved slightly since the last reporting period. The Government of National Unity and the Government of Southern Sudan made the following commitments during the visit of my Special Representative to the Sudan in January 2007: to allow UNICEF and the United Nations Mission in Sudan (UNMIS) access to the military barracks of the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF), Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) and allied armed forces and groups to monitor and verify compliance; to adopt and implement national legislation to criminalize the recruitment of child soldiers in a timely manner; to allocate adequate resources for the reintegration of children associated with the armed forces; to establish jointly with the United Nations a task force on sexual violence and abuse against children; and to ensure the safety and protection of humanitarian personnel.

95. As a follow-up to those commitments, some important measures have been undertaken by the Government of Southern Sudan to address the situation of children, including progressive legislative reform, structures to address sexual exploitation and abuse and other child protection concerns and a serious commitment to the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of children.

96. UNMIS has engaged in dialogue with SPLA and SAF to end violations against children and release children from their military units, particularly those newly incorporated from other armed groups. On 7 June 2007, 60 SAF and SPLA commanders committed to end child recruitment and developed an Area Joint Military Committee action plan to address abductions, rape and other sexual violence against children in Upper Nile, Jonglei and Unity States. However, SAF

and SPLA have not allowed the United Nations unhindered access to military barracks for verification purposes. Progress has also been limited with regard to the timely release and reintegration of children.

97. During the reporting period, hundreds of children were released from SPLA and several from other armed groups aligned with SAF, through the coordination of the Southern and Northern Sudan Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Commissions. In May 2007, 25 children were released from SPLA in Bentiu, Southern Sudan, and reunited with their families in the North. A separate disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme for approximately 600 children from SPLA ranks in Southern Sudan is currently being organized. Despite this progress, thousands of children are still held in military barracks, and some demobilized children return to the army owing to an inefficient reintegration mechanism.

98. Children continue to be recruited and used by armed groups aligned with SAF and SPLA forces that fall under their respective commands. In late November 2006, confirmed reports indicate that SAF-aligned forces of Major General Gabriel Tang Ginye recruited approximately 70 children, including street children, during hostilities in Malakal Province. Furthermore, at least another 300 children are confirmed to be present in the Pibor Defence Forces, also previously an SAF-aligned armed group. The Mundari militia, which operates in Terrekeka, Central Equatoria, is also reported to have 40 children in its ranks.

99. During the reporting period, many children were killed during gunfights between SPLA and SAF. There are also persistent reports of SPLA forces attacking or occupying schools in various locations of Southern Sudan. On 24 October 2006, SPLA forces raided a school in Nassir, Upper Nile, for the purposes of recruiting the children. A total of 32 boys and 24 teachers were abducted, although all but 2 boys were released. Further, SAF and SPLA continue to deny child protection personnel access to areas north and south of Abyei Province, Southern Sudan.

100. There were seven confirmed cases of child abduction in Southern Sudan, several of which were attributed to LRA. On 28 March 2007, a village near Maridi, Western Equatoria, was attacked by armed men, suspected to be from LRA. Six girls, aged between 12 and 17 years, were abducted and their whereabouts remain unknown.

101. There are some promising signs in the current phase of the Darfur peace process and agreement on a hybrid African Union-United Nations mission. However, the day-to-day situation for children on the ground remains grave. There are credible reports indicating that SAF, the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM-Peace Wing), the Sudan Liberation Army/Minni Minawi (SLA/MM), SLA/Gasim (SLA/AG), SLA/Abdul Wahid (SLA/AW), SLA/Shafi (SLA/S), the Popular Defence Forces (PDF), Chadian rebel forces, Government of the Sudan allied militias, known as the Janjaweed, and the Central Reserve Police (CRP) continue to recruit and use children. However, in many instances owing to insecurity, access limitations and a multiplicity of armed actors, it has been difficult to identify the perpetrators or verify the allegations. During the reporting period, some children interviewed by the United Nations reported that they had been fighting in East Jebel Mara, Southern Darfur, for at least three years. Those children are allegedly associated with SLA/AS, SLA/AG or SLA/AW. In April 2007, armed children, aged 12 years, were identified with SLA/MM at Khazan Tunjur, South-West El-Fasher, Northern Darfur. In April 2007, United Nations and African Union Mission in the Sudan (AMIS) monitors identified many armed children believed to

be associated with SAF-allied militia in the Kutum area. In May 2007, 13 boys were identified with JEM-Peace Wing. AMIS also confirmed the presence of children as young as 15 years recruited and used by PDF in Mukjar, Western Darfur.

102. In Darfur, there were 46 verified child deaths perpetrated by the Janjaweed and SAF. On 22 November 2006, bombardments from an SAF Antonov plane and two helicopter gunships killed two children in Kishi village, near Bir Maza; and in May 2007, two children aged 4 and 5 were killed as a result of the Government of the Sudan aerial bombardments of villages in Northern Darfur.

103. Rape continues to be widespread in Darfur, and is used as a method of warfare, with an increasing trend to specifically target younger girls. During the reporting period, there have been 23 confirmed reports of rape, with two of the victims being boys. The perpetrators include elements of SAF, CRP, Janjaweed and SLA/MM. Although the prosecution of perpetrators of rape is rare in Darfur, during the reporting period two CRP officers and one SAF soldier were prosecuted for the rape of children as young as 13 years old.

104. In Darfur, frequent hijackings of humanitarian agencies' vehicles impede the delivery of aid and services to the most vulnerable, particularly children. Abductions and the use of physical and psychological violence against aid workers during attacks on humanitarian compounds are also increasing. The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs reports that between January and August 2007, five aid workers have been killed, 11 injured and 53 physically assaulted.

105. On 11 June 2007, SLA/MM signed an action plan to end the recruitment and use of children. It agreed to release and hand over all children associated with their forces or any other forces aligned with them; develop and implement an age-determination process; and provide special protection for girls and women. The action plan will benefit 1,800 children associated with SLA/MM. UNICEF and UNMIS have also been in dialogue with representatives of SLA/AW, SLA/AS and SLA (Free Will), who indicated their willingness to collaborate towards the release of children from their ranks. However, as at 30 June 2007, no concrete commitments to release children had been made.

106. Some progress has also been made in Eastern Sudan. As part of the Eastern Sudan Peace Agreement signed on 14 October 2006 between the Eastern Front armed group and the Government of National Unity, 3,700 ex-combatants are being demobilized, 250 of whom are children.

B. Information on compliance and progress in situations not on the agenda of the Security Council or in other situations of concern

Developments in Chad

107. With the talks between the Government and the armed opposition in Tripoli, and the rainy season, fighting in eastern Chad has significantly decreased. The security situation, however, remains extremely volatile and tense owing to the unsuccessful integration of the United Front for Change (FUC) fighters in the national army following the peace agreement signed in December 2006 by the FUC leader, Mahamat Nour, and President Deby, and the build-up of Government forces. The prevailing insecurity in eastern Chad is also exacerbated by sporadic cross-border raids by Janjaweed militias from the Sudan and inter-communal violence. The decrease in clashes has not reduced the phenomenon of forced recruitment of children by both the State and non-State parties to the conflict.

Reports indicate that children have been recruited into the Chadian National Army. Although the actual figures are unknown, approximately 400 child soldiers, 100 of whom are between the ages of 8 and 12, were found stationed at a Government training centre in central Mongo. On 9 May 2007, the Government of Chad and UNICEF signed an agreement for the demobilization of child soldiers throughout the country. As at 30 July, 425 children, all boys, had been released from Mongo and Moussoro military instruction centres and the N'Djamena main military camp, and transferred to five transit care centres in Abeche and N'Djamena. However, thousands of children in various locations in eastern Chad have yet to be released from armed forces and groups.

108. United Nations monitors have reported that the recruitment and use of children by Chadian armed groups is widespread, although difficulties in identifying leaders, the constant shifting of alliances and groupings and the vast number of groups make it difficult to establish the chain of responsibility for recruitment. UNHCR is currently seeking to increase its child protection staff in eastern Chad. It is estimated that hundreds of children are within the ranks of the Union of Forces for Democracy and Development (Union des Forces pour la Démocratie et le Développement (UFDD)). In November 2006, during clashes between the Chadian National Army and UFDD in Abeche, 60 per cent of UFDD members captured were children. Furthermore, although the recruitment and use of girls by armed forces and groups is not widespread, 50 girls were allegedly associated with FUC in the area of Guereda, Dar Tama Department.

109. Thousands of children have also been recruited and used by Sudanese armed groups backed by the Chadian Government, including JEM and the SLA/G-19 breakaway faction from refugee camps located close to the Sudan-eastern Chad border. In January 2007, 39 children from the Breidjing refugee camp were recruited by Sudanese rebels, and their whereabouts remains unknown. Furthermore, there have been reports of Chadian children being forcibly recruited by the Janjaweed, coming from areas across the border in Darfur.

110. Systematic use of child soldiers by Chadian self-defence groups has been reported in Ade, Mogororo and Dogdore of the Dar Sila Department. In January 2007, nine children between the ages of 13 and 17 were recruited in the surrounding perimeters of the Djabal refugee camp in Goz Beida.

111. Many children are killed and maimed by unexploded ordnance and landmines, which are a result of military engagements in 2006 and 2007. In 2007, 107 child victims of landmines and unexploded ordnances were documented, of whom 22 were killed and 85 injured. In May 2007, four children were playing with a piece of unexploded ordnance in Zaigueye when it exploded, killing two of the children and maiming the others.

112. There have been a large number of incidents of sexual and gender-based violence targeted at women and girls by members of armed groups, particularly within the refugee populations. During the first three months of 2007, 139 cases of sexual and gender-based violence were reported in the 12 refugee camps in the eastern region. However, as it remains a taboo subject, comprehensive information on the number of victims and survivors of sexual violence and the proportion of such incidents perpetrated by members of armed forces and groups is difficult to obtain.

Developments in Colombia

113. The Government of Colombia, through the Colombian Family Welfare Institute, has carried out programmatic efforts to prevent the recruitment of children and reintegrate children into their communities. To date, the Government's efforts have benefited 3,326 children previously associated with illegal armed groups.

114. The Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP) continues to recruit and use children. Cases have been reported in the Departments of Cauca, Antioquia, Sucre, Bolivar, Cundinamarca, Guaviare, Meta and Nariño. In Corinto, Cauca Department, members of FARC frequently visit schools to persuade children to join their ranks. Furthermore, despite current talks between the Government and the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN) and demands by the National Council for Peace that ELN cease recruitment and release all children from its ranks immediately, this group also continues to recruit children. In December 2006, two girls aged 14 and 15 were forcibly recruited by ELN in Nariño, municipality of Guachavez-Santa Cruz.

115. Children have been used by Government armed forces for intelligence purposes despite official Government policy to the contrary. On 6 March 2007, the Colombian Ministry of Defence issued directive 30743, prohibiting all members of the armed forces from utilizing children for intelligence activities, especially children recovered from illegal armed groups. However, the Defensoría del Pueblo reported that in Cauca, a child demobilized from FARC was used by the XXIX Brigade as an informant for the armed forces in an operation and was later killed at the age of 19 years while in combat with FARC, in contravention of the Paris Principles and Guidelines on children associated with armed forces or armed groups. In April 2007, two children aged 8 and 11 in Urrau, Chocó Department, were forced by the national army to carry materials for them. In Bebedo, Chocó Department, reports received by the United Nations in June 2007 confirm that the armed forces operating in that area provided children with food in exchange for cleaning and maintaining their weapons. The Defensoría del Pueblo continues to report children being kept for unauthorized periods in police stations, army battalions or judicial police premises.

116. There are increasing concerns about reported violations and abuses committed against children by new organized illegal armed groups. These groups, such as the Aguilas Negras, Manos Negras, Organización Nueva Generación or the Rastrojos are largely involved in criminal activities related especially to drug trafficking. The Government considers these groups as criminal gangs. In June 2007, Aguilas Negras was reported to have coerced children to join their ranks in Cartagena, Bolivar Department. Reports on the recruitment and use by the other three groups mentioned above have also been received in the reporting period from Valle de Cauca, Bolivar in Cartagena city and Antioquia in Medellin city. Furthermore, the two illegal armed groups outside the demobilization process listed in my 2006 report, Autodefensas Campesinas del Casanare and Frente Cacique Pipinta, have been only partially demobilized, and it is believed that children are still present in those groups. The gravity of the reported violations by those groups is very real and calls for serious efforts to enhance the protection of children.

117. Positive efforts have been made by the Government in the demobilization of combatants from the Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia (AUC). According to official figures, 63 children were demobilized from AUC in 2006, compared with 17,581 adults. Those children, however, were not formally handed over as per the requirements of the collective demobilization process, and there are concerns that a

number of children have been missed out in that process. The Colombian Family Welfare Institute reports that an additional 32 children were demobilized on an individual basis during the same period.

118. The national Instituto de Medicina Legal y Ciencias Forenses certified that in the reporting period 37 children, including 13 girls and 24 boys, were killed and 34 children, including 4 girls, were injured allegedly by Government security forces, of which, according to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), nine cases have been filed by the Judicial Police. Extrajudicial executions by some Government security forces have also been reported. In March 2007, two people, including one 16-year-old boy, were killed by forces from the XVI Brigade of the National Army. According to eyewitness accounts, those killed were subsequently presented as guerrilla members. Children have also been abducted, killed and injured by illegal armed groups. From October 2006 to May 2007, approximately 43 children were reported to have been held as hostages. In October 2006, a 17-year-old girl was abducted in Toribio, Cauca, and later killed, allegedly by FARC, and on 9 April 2007, in Buenaventura, Valle del Cauca, a girl was abducted and killed by members of FARC. On 9 January 2007, a child was abducted and killed by members of Aguilas Negras.

119. There are reports that rape and other sexual violence and exploitation continue to be perpetrated by illegal armed groups and some members of the State forces. OHCHR reported that FARC-EP had committed forced abortions and other degrading treatment against young girls in their ranks. A report was also received by OHCHR that two girls, aged 7 and 11 years from Florida, Department of Valle del Cauca, were sexually abused by a soldier from the San Mateo Battalion on 19 November 2006.

120. There have been some reports of schools being occupied by illegal armed groups. Landmines and abandoned explosive ordnance are often left behind once the illegal armed groups retreat from their occupation of these facilities. A school in Guacamayal, Caldas Department, is still surrounded by landmines. On the other hand, in Puerto Caicedo, Putumayo Department, a school was occupied by members of the National Army. In La Joya, also in Putumayo Department, tanks were placed at the entrance of a school as part of a military checkpoint from July to September 2007.

Developments in the Philippines

121. Armed clashes in the Philippines intensified during the reporting period as the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) stepped up its military campaigns against non-State armed groups, particularly in Mindanao. Government forces have reiterated their declaration of an all-out war and engaged the rebel New People's Army (NPA) in skirmishes. Although the Moro National Liberation Front signed a final peace agreement with the Government in 1996, some of its factions based in the Province of Sulu, southern Philippines, have fought AFP in several large-scale confrontations. AFP and its paramilitary allies have also battled elements of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) in the Provinces of Basilan, Shariff Kabunsuan and Maguindanao despite an existing agreement on cessation of hostilities. Military campaigns against the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) in Basilan and Sulu also continue. Despite these conflicts, the ability to document child rights violations remains weak.

122. During the reporting period, the Government recorded the recruitment of 11 children, allegedly by NPA: 1 from Leyte, 7 from Samar and 3 from Agusan del Sur.

Three of the children are girls and remain in the custody of the Department of Social Welfare and Development awaiting reintegration. The remaining children have been released to their families. The children were allegedly captured by Government forces in the course of their military operations. However, United Nations partners claim that the children were innocent civilians who happened to be in the areas where the military conducted their patrols or armed encounters took place. The Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) reiterates its policy not to recruit children under age 18 as armed combatants, although it does not deny using children for non-combatant functions in violation of international legal standards. CPP claims disciplinary action is taken against violators of this policy, although monitoring of such compliance remains limited.

123. There are indications that children may be present in the ranks of MILF and ASG, however, owing to access limitations, no new reports of the recruitment and use of children were obtained in the reporting period.

124. United Nations partners reported that four children were killed, three in Mindanao and one in the Bicol region, and seven children were maimed in the Provinces of Cagayan, Davao del Norte and Sulu. Three of the children were girls between the ages of 9 and 14 years. Those incidents occurred during military operations or armed encounters against insurgents, and the victims and survivors have been branded as "rebels" or collateral damage. The most notable case was that of a 9-year-old girl who was killed when Government soldiers opened fire near her home in the Province of Compostela Valley on 31 March 2007, allegedly in pursuit of NPA guerrillas. The military had initially declared her an NPA child soldier but later recanted its accusation, and the Philippine Commission on Human Rights officially declared that she was "caught in the crossfire". In another incident on 23 January 2007, in Baggao, Cagayan Valley, two girls aged 14 and 15 years were seriously injured by the 17th Infantry Battalion of the Philippine Army when they opened fire without warning in the area.

125. The Philippine country-level task force on monitoring and reporting was convened on 26 March 2007, comprising of United Nations system agencies and local human rights organizations. On 19 July 2007, the Government of the Philippines, through its Permanent Mission to the United Nations, has affirmed its concurrence with the implementation of Security Council resolution 1612 (2005). In addition, the Government is carefully studying the Paris Principles, which could pave the way towards improving programme interventions for children and armed conflict by the Government.

Developments in Sri Lanka

126. From 1 October 2006 to 31 August 2007, UNICEF received confirmed reports of 339 children being recruited or re-recruited by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), of which 41 per cent were from Batticaloa, compared with 679 children recruited in the preceding 11 months. In the same period, LTTE released 226 children, compared with 171 children released in the preceding 11 months, predominantly from Kilinochchi. Of the children recruited, 78 per cent were boys and 22 per cent girls. The average age of the children recruited during the reporting period was 16 years. Among the 6,221 children registered on the UNICEF database as having been recruited since 2001, 1,469 cases remain outstanding, including 335 children currently under 18 years of age as at 31 August 2007. The reported cases may only be indicative of the actual number of children recruited given access limitations in LTTE-controlled areas. LTTE has designated its so-called Child

Protection Authority as the interlocutor on child recruitment issues and Security Council resolution 1612 (2005), and weekly dialogue between UNICEF and the so-called Child Protection Authority continues. As at 22 August 2007, eight children continued to reside in the Educational Skills Development Centre, in violation of the recommendations of the Working Group of the Security Council. At the time of reporting, UNICEF was in the process of arranging the return of those eight children to their families.

127. UNICEF received confirmed reports that 246 children had been recruited or re-recruited by the Karuna faction during the reporting period, compared with 154 children recruited in the previous 11-month period. Most of the children were recruited from Batticaloa. The Karuna faction released 80 children in the same period, compared with 14 children released in the previous 11-month period. The average age of the children being recruited by the Karuna faction was 16 years. All of the children recruited were boys, with the exception of one girl. From the 385 children registered on the UNICEF database as having been recruited, 214 cases remained outstanding as at 31 August 2007, including 160 children currently under 18 years old.

128. The majority of reported child abduction cases occurred in Jaffna, Batticaloa and Vavuniya. Abductions are carried out mainly in the context of recruitment, and are attributed to LTTE and Karuna faction. In some instances, children who were abducted were later found to have been killed. On 14 November 2006, four boys were abducted in Batticaloa. That case is part of several group abductions of children in the area which remain unresolved. On 18 December 2006, 22 students were abducted by LTTE for recruitment purposes while attending a tutoring class in Ampara. All of the children were released within two days as a result of UNICEF advocacy with LTTE. On 22 December 2006 and 18 March 2007, two boys were reportedly detained by the Government of Sri Lanka security forces in Jaffna and have subsequently been reported missing.

129. Since 1 October 2006, according to verified reports, 46 children were killed and 79 maimed owing to the conflict. This includes the deaths of 11 recruited children, 9 of whom were recruited by LTTE and 2 by the Karuna faction. More than half of the killings and maimings occurred in Batticaloa district. On 2 January 2007, a Sri Lankan Air Force aerial bombardment killed seven children and injured eight in Padahuthurai, an internally displaced persons village near Mannar. All but one of the children was under the age of 10 years. On 2 April 2007, three children were killed and four maimed in a bus explosion at a military checkpoint in Ampara attributed to LTTE.

130. Aerial strikes and shelling by the Sri Lankan Army (SLA) and attacks by LTTE have resulted in the destruction of schools and the death and injury of students and teachers. On 8 November 2006, an SLA artillery bombardment hit an internally displaced persons camp located in a school in Vaharai, Batticaloa. At least 26 civilians died, including at least 2 children, and at least 69 civilians were injured, including 21 children under the age of 15 years. On 7 December 2006, LTTE shelling hit a school in Trincomalee which resulted in the death of a teacher and injury of 15 people, including 5 children.

131. Hospitals have also been damaged during SLA operations in the reporting period. On 18 October 2006, the Gramodaya Health Centre in Vaharai was damaged by SLA shelling, and the Centre was used by SLA from January to the end of July 2007. The Special Task Forces of the Government of Sri Lanka have also been utilizing a maternity ward and on-call duty room at a hospital in Batticaloa since

July 2007. On 14 July 2007, SLA shelling damaged the maternity section and outpatient department of a hospital in north Vavuniya.

132. LTTE submitted a draft action plan on 28 March 2007 and a revised version on 19 July 2007, following dialogue with the country-level task force on monitoring and reporting. However, those drafts committed LTTE to a minimum age of recruitment of 17 years until 1 January 2008, at which point the minimum age of recruitment would be raised to 18 years. The delay in raising the minimum age of recruitment to 18 years is contradictory to their previous commitments and international standards. At the time of reporting, LTTE had indicated that the minimum age of recruitment would be raised to 18 years. However, this has not translated into a commitment to release those between 17 and 18 years old at the present time. On the other hand, despite continued advocacy, there has been less progress with the Tamil Makkal Viduthalai Pulighal, the political wing of the Karuna faction. Following the commitment made to the Working Group of the Security Council, a committee comprising senior officials of the Government of Sri Lanka was established to carry out an independent and credible investigation into the allegations that certain elements of the Government security forces are supporting and sometimes participating in the abduction and forced recruitment of children by the Karuna faction. While the appointment of the committee is welcomed, there is an urgent need for the Government of Sri Lanka to investigate the allegations and take active measures to prevent grave violations against children, including the abduction and recruitment of children by the Karuna faction, especially in Government-controlled areas. Action is also still required by the Government of Sri Lanka to address the situation of children who sought special protection and surrendered to Government forces and who are currently in Pallekele and Jaffna Prisons, including the need for appropriate rehabilitative measures.

Developments in Uganda

133. Although the Government of Uganda has no deliberate or systematic policy to recruit children, the lack of effective monitoring at the local level leads to children continuing to join some elements of the armed forces. During the reporting period there were 16 cases of recruitment and use of children aged 14 to 17 years by the Uganda People's Defence Forces (UPDF). Three cases were reported in Pader district in which children who had escaped from LRA were used for gathering intelligence before being released in February 2007. In that regard, UPDF did not make use of the agreed civilian reintegration structures in place. Three other cases were reported in the Teso subregion in May 2007, but with the full cooperation of UPDF, the children were later released to OHCHR. The other 10 cases concern the use of children within auxiliary forces of the UPDF, in particular the local defence units. Young boys continue to serve in the local defence units in Anaka and Alero sub-counties, Amuru district, Acholiland. To date, there are still no signs of the release of 1,128 children reported to have been mobilized into the local defence units in late 2004 in Kitgum, Pader and parts of Teso region. The Government has claimed that the local defence units have been disbanded and some of its members integrated into UPDF and Uganda Police Force. During this process, the opportunity to utilize the agreed civilian reintegration structure in place was also missed. The country-level task force on monitoring and reporting noted that comprehensive planning for the demobilization and disarmament of children associated with the local defence units was an essential element for sustainable peace in northern Uganda. In early August 2007, the task force team met with the Minister for Foreign Affairs to finalize an action plan to prevent the recruitment and use of child soldiers

within the framework of Security Council resolution 1612 (2005). A workshop was held in Kampala on 24 August 2007 with key stakeholders from the Government and the task force team, culminating in a draft action plan to be adopted by the Government shortly.

134. Since December 2006, 48 cases of rape and other sexual violence against girls perpetrated by UPDF or local defence unit elements were reported, of which 37 cases were recorded from March to August 2007 in Kitgum, Gulu, Lira and Amuru districts. Thirty-four of the latter offences were committed by UPDF forces, and three were perpetrated by members of the local defence units. Most of those cases occurred in internally displaced camp settings and return areas. In February 2007, four girls were abducted by a UPDF soldier in Gulu district, resulting in the rape of two of the girls, aged 12 and 14. In the same month, another 14-year-old girl was raped and strangled to death by a local defence unit soldier in Amuru district. Although these cases have been reported to the police, no arrests have been made either owing to difficulties in identifying the perpetrator or because the suspects have disappeared.

135. Two primary schools in Aswa county, Gulu district of Acholiland, were occupied by military forces and used for military training purposes. Through OHCHR intervention, the army vacated the schools on 23 August 2007. In Lira district, the Baralegi primary school in Okwang sub-county is still occupied by military forces. Owing to severe damage to the school structure, the Government plans to build new schools.

136. Owing to the absence of LRA in Ugandan territory during the reporting period, no cases attributable to it have been recorded by the country-level task force on monitoring and reporting. LRA has not released any children from the Ri-Kwangba assembly point in Southern Sudan. However, since the signing of the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement in August 2006, approximately 70 children, 15 per cent of whom are girls, have returned from Southern Sudan to reception centres in Gulu, Kitgum, Pader and Lira. The majority of the children had either escaped or were captured by UPDF or SPLA forces, while six children were transferred from the Toto Chan reception centre in Juba, Southern Sudan. Those children have been successfully reintegrated into their communities through UNICEF-supported child protection programmes. A mechanism is currently in place to receive the remaining children still held by LRA. The country-level task force continues to advocate for the release of all children and women remaining in LRA captivity.

C. Sexual exploitation and abuse of children by United Nations peacekeeping and other United Nations personnel

137. During the reporting period, the United Nations continued to seek ways in which to strengthen the institutional framework to prevent and address sexual exploitation and abuse by peacekeepers and other United Nations personnel, with some initiatives directed specifically at preventing the abuse of children.

138. The ability of the United Nations to cover field locations grew considerably, and as at 31 July 2007, the Department of Field Support has established Conduct and Discipline Units to cover 18 peace operations.[3] Those units are responsible for receiving, monitoring and tracking complaints of sexual exploitation and abuse

[3] A list of peace operations is available at http://www.un.org/Depts/dpko/CDT/about.html.

against peacekeepers, developing and implementing prevention initiatives and enforcing standards of conduct.

139. In 2006, the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) reported the receipt of 371 allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse. Some 357 of these were from United Nations peace operations, which represents a 5 per cent increase in reported allegations from the previous year. During the first half of 2007, OIOS reported the receipt of 72 allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse from United Nations peace operations. This downward trend in reported allegations is attributable to the impact of prevention and enforcement initiatives which the United Nations put in place over the course of 2005 and 2006. Of the allegations reported for peacekeeping operations during 2006, 82 investigations have been completed as of June 2007. Of those, five involved acts of sexual exploitation and abuse against minors. The completed investigations resulted in the dismissal or non-renewal of contracts of 1 civilian staff member and the repatriation of 1 police and 13 military personnel.

140. In June 2007, allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse by a contingent of United Nations peacekeepers were reported in the United Nations peace operations in Côte d'Ivoire. Those allegations involved acts of abuse of young women and girls. OIOS was immediately informed and the investigation process was initiated. Owing to the seriousness of the allegations, the contingent concerned was cantoned. The Departments of Peacekeeping Operations and Field Support, together with the concerned Member State, remain actively seized of the matter.

141. Recognizing the importance of a strategy for victim assistance as a part of the comprehensive response to sexual exploitation and abuse, the General Assembly, in its resolution 61/291, established an ad hoc open-ended Working Group to consider a draft policy statement and comprehensive strategy on assistance and support to victims of sexual exploitation and abuse by United Nations staff and related personnel (see A/60/877, annex). That Working Group commenced its deliberations during the sixty-second session of the General Assembly. It is anticipated that, when endorsed by the Assembly, the strategy will provide an institutional framework that will give much-needed support to children who are victims of abuse or are born as a result of cases of abuse by United Nations staff and related personnel. In the interim, victims of abuse may receive emergency medical and psychosocial support facilitated by United Nations operations on the ground in conjunction with local service providers. In some peace operations, such as in Liberia, the United Nations peace operation has established a Rape and Sexual Assault Rapid Response Team to ensure that swift action is taken to aid women and children who are victims of abuse. That team, which embraces local partners, has helped some minors to receive safe housing and medical attention. This initiative was intended to minimize the risk of losing or damaging critical evidence and to reduce the exposure of survivors of abuse to further trauma. The challenge now is to create sustainable initiatives for victims' support. Implementing this strategy is of critical importance.

142. A high-level conference on sexual exploitation and abuse, held on 4 December 2006, jointly hosted by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, UNDP and UNICEF, resulted in the issuance of a Statement of Commitment on Eliminating Sexual Exploitation and Abuse by United Nations and Non-United Nations Personnel, which contained 10 principles to facilitate rapid implementation of standards relating to the prevention and elimination of sexual exploitation and abuse. As at 31 July 2007, 40 United Nations and 31 non-United Nations entities had endorsed the Statement and committed to combating sexual exploitation and abuse.

143. Significant progress was made during the reporting period with the establishment of an effective legislative framework which members of national contingents are required to comply with. It is encouraging to note that in July 2007, the General Assembly unanimously endorsed recommendations to incorporate revisions on standards of conduct into the draft model memorandum of understanding between troop-contributing countries and the United Nations (see A/61/19 (Part III)). In addition to strengthening the accountability of uniformed contingent personnel, the revisions to the memorandum of understanding also emphasize the need to immediately collect forensic evidence in sexual exploitation and abuse cases in a manner which will be sufficient to prosecute perpetrators in their home country.

IV. Information on progress made in the implementation of the monitoring and reporting mechanism and mainstreaming of child protection in United Nations peacekeeping operations

144. As called for in paragraph 3 of Security Council resolution 1612 (2005), a monitoring and reporting mechanism on grave child rights violations has been established in situations of armed conflict, listed in annex I of the Secretary-General's 2006 report, that are on the agenda of the Security Council, namely Burundi, Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Somalia and the Sudan; and in other situations of armed conflict, listed in annex II of the Secretary-General's 2006 report, that have voluntarily implemented the monitoring and reporting mechanism, namely, Chad, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Uganda. The Government of Myanmar has also agreed to cooperate in establishing a monitoring and reporting mechanism within the framework of resolution 1612 (2005).

145. Since its inception, monitoring and reporting has moved from a concept to a concrete United Nations system response. The establishment of the monitoring and reporting mechanism has allowed for systematic, reliable, timely and objective information to be gathered on the six grave violations against children in armed conflict, including the identification of offending parties, which feeds into my country-specific reports examined by the Working Group of the Security Council on Children and Armed Conflict. The designation of these offending parties on the annexed lists of my annual reports has proven to have a deterrent effect and has allowed the relevant "destinations for action", such as the Working Group, to maintain political pressure and take action on parties to conflict who are found to be persistent violators of child rights. Reports generated through the monitoring and reporting mechanism process have also contributed significantly to increased international awareness on the issue of Children and Armed Conflict, particularly though their inclusion in Security Council resolutions and debates that have been generated in other United Nations forums.

146. There have been positive developments as a result of the recommendations and actions taken by the Working Group, including drawing the attention of the Security Council as well as its sanctions committees, where applicable, to the need to follow up on the recommendations addressed to them. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, after an initial delay, the Government brought to trial former Mai-Mai Commander Kyungu Mutanga, alias "Gedeon", for war crimes and crimes against humanity, including the recruitment of 300 children in Katanga Province from 2003 to 2006. This action follows strong recommendations by the Working Group to take appropriate legal measures against members of armed groups accused of grave

crimes against children. In Côte d'Ivoire, the Working Group requested that Forces de Défense et de Sécurité des Forces nouvelles continue its dissemination of the command order to end the detention of children. Since then, that command order has been successfully implemented, and regular monitoring of prisons and detention facilities in areas under the control of FDS-FN is carried out by the United Nations to ensure that no children are incarcerated.

147. Direct contact and dialogue by the Working Group with all the Government representatives of countries whose situation had been considered by the Working Group has also played a role in encouraging their active participation in its meetings, and in obtaining their positive commitments to protect children affected by armed conflict. The Government of Sri Lanka reaffirmed its zero-tolerance policy for the recruitment and use of children and reiterated its commitment to the Working Group by establishing a committee comprising high-level Government officials to conduct an independent and credible investigation into allegations that some security forces are abetting the Karuna faction in the recruitment and use of children. The Government of Uganda also reiterated its commitment to finalize its action plan pursuant to Security Council resolution 1612 (2005) in order that the Uganda People's Defence Forces and local defence units be removed from the annexes of my annual reports.

148. Similarly, cooperative and constructive engagement by the Working Group with parties in situations of conflict not on the agenda of the Council, such as the Philippines, Sri Lanka and Uganda, has resulted in their acceptance of the implementation of the monitoring and reporting mechanism pursuant to resolution 1612 (2005).

149. However, in certain situations, increased pressure is required against persistent and recalcitrant violators of child rights, such as dissident General Laurent Nkunda in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Janjaweed in the Sudan, and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam in Sri Lanka, by further considering the need to impose targeted measures against those parties.

150. In my 2006 report to the Security Council, I recommended that the monitoring and reporting mechanism be expanded to give equal care and attention to children affected by armed conflict in all situations of concern, thereby encouraging the establishment of the mechanism in all situations on the annexed lists. In April 2007, the Working Group placed the situation of children affected by armed conflict in Myanmar on its agenda. Despite the agreement achieved with the Government of Myanmar on monitoring and reporting mechanism implementation, the issue of access in a timely manner to conflict-affected areas, as well as other Government restrictions, are factors that need to be overcome to enable the effective and independent functioning of the mechanism. In situations not on the agenda of the Council, such as Chad, Colombia and the Philippines, overriding factors such as insecurity, restriction or denial of access to certain areas of the country and insufficient resources pose a significant challenge to the establishment of a rigorous monitoring and reporting mechanism. For example, precarious and unpredictable security situations in eastern Chad or in certain areas of operation of illegal armed groups in the Philippines and Colombia make it difficult to obtain accurate and up-to-date information on child rights violations.

151. My Special Representative has undertaken several country missions to carry out high-level advocacy on issues of children and armed conflict and to assist the authorities, United Nations and civil society partners in improving the situation of children in armed conflict. Several of these country missions have been mandated

by the Working Group. Cooperation from Governments in extending their invitation to my Special Representative has been instrumental in achieving those objectives. In the reporting period, missions to Sri Lanka (November 2006); the Sudan (January 2007); the Democratic Republic of the Congo (March 2007); Lebanon, Occupied Palestinian Territory and Israel (April 2007); and Myanmar (June 2007) were carried out by my Special Representative or, in the case of Sri Lanka, by the Special Adviser to the Special Representative. Specific outcomes of those missions have been described under the relevant country situations in section III of the present report.

152. My 2006 report highlighted the findings from the study of child protection experience in peace operations[4] commissioned by the Peacekeeping Best Practices Section, as called for in paragraph 20(d) of Security Council resolution 1612 (2005). The study recognized the crucial need of child protection advisers, and the significant impact they achieve through their monitoring and reporting capacity in increasing the attention to the rights of war-affected children on the United Nations peace and security agenda. The study, however, also brought attention to the need for a clear inter-agency decision-making process to ensure that all child protection actors are playing a role in such a way that takes advantage of their comparative strengths.

153. Five main lessons emerged from the study, namely: (a) the concept of child protection advisers and their current terms of reference should be jointly reviewed and clarified by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict and UNICEF; (b) there is a need for a specialized capacity at the Department of Peacekeeping Operations headquarters to provide guidance, training and daily operational support to the child protection advisers in the field; (c) best practices need to be captured from child protection advisers and fed into policy and guidance development by the Department, in consultation with the Office of the Special Representative, UNICEF and other partners; (d) the location of child protection units or advisers within the mission structure needs to be reviewed and possibly standardized; and (e) the profile and selection process for child protection advisers should be reviewed by the Department, in consultation with the Office of the Special Representative and UNICEF. The Peacekeeping Best Practices Section is currently in the process of recruiting a senior-level child protection focal point, who will be responsible for following up on the above-mentioned lessons and recommendations.

154. The child protection advisers should also be placed in Afghanistan, Iraq, Lebanon and the Occupied Palestinian Territory to augment the human rights monitoring expertise in the respective missions. There should also be the placement of child protection advisers within the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur and United Nations-European Union multidimensional presence in Chad and the Central African Republic. This would strengthen the task of monitoring and reporting, as well as help to provide timely and accurate information for prompt advocacy and response to the issue of children affected by armed conflict in those conflict situations.

155. The Committee on the Rights of the Child has recently adopted new reporting guidelines under the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child

[4] United Nations, "The Impact of Child Protection Advisers in United Nations Peacekeeping Operations" (May 2007).

on the involvement of children in armed conflict, which encourage States parties to cooperate with my Special Representative and the monitoring and reporting mechanism as per the framework of Security Council resolution 1612 (2005), in the implementation of the Optional Protocol.

V. Information on progress made in the development and implementation of action plans

156. Pursuant to Security Council resolutions 1539 (2004) and 1612 (2005), parties are called upon to develop and implement concrete time-bound action plans, in close collaboration with United Nations peacekeeping missions and/or United Nations country teams. During the reporting period, progress on action plans has been made with armed forces and groups in four country situations on the agenda of the Security Council, namely, the Central African Republic, Côte d'Ivoire, Myanmar and the Sudan; and two parties in country situations not on the Council's agenda, namely Sri Lanka and Uganda. In Chad, although an action plan has not been developed, the Government signed an agreement with UNICEF to demobilize child soldiers from the armed forces.

157. In the reporting period, several factors have contributed to the compliance by parties, including their engagement in action plans to halt and prevent the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict:

(a) There has been sustained engagement and pressure on parties by the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict, including the possibility of targeted measures;

(b) Trust and confidence-building measures carried out by the country-level task force on monitoring and reporting and United Nations country teams with parties have resulted in significant achievements with respect to the demobilization and release of children associated with armed forces and groups;

(c) The visits of my Special Representative have provided the opportunity for high-level advocacy and opened doors for follow-up dialogues with military and political authorities by the task force and United Nations country teams;

(d) The continued mainstreaming of issues on children and armed conflict in the peacekeeping missions through child protection advisers, and enhanced cooperation with UNICEF and OHCHR are resulting in greater efforts for the protection of children.

158. While progress has been made with certain parties to conflict, progress with others has been slower. In Sri Lanka, the draft action plan submitted by LTTE commits the group to not recruit children under 17 years of age, which is inconsistent with international standards. In Myanmar, although KNU and KNPP had engaged with the United Nations on deeds of commitment following their listing on the annexes of my annual report to the Security Council in 2006, the Government of Myanmar had been reticent to allow for further dialogue owing to various concerns relating to their status as non-State actors. Similar sensitivities apply to the conflict in Colombia. In Uganda, an action plan which meets international standards has yet to be finalized.

VI. Recommendations

159. **It is recommended that the Security Council consider giving equal care and attention to children affected by armed conflict in all situations of concern listed in the annexes to my report.**

160. **It is further recommended that the Security Council give equal weight to all categories of grave violations, including not only the recruitment and use of children, but also the killing and maiming of children, rape and other grave sexual violence, abductions, attacks against schools or hospitals and denial of humanitarian access to children.**

161. **While recognizing the efforts and cooperation by some countries, the implementation of the monitoring and reporting mechanism within the framework of Security Council resolution 1612 (2005) should be supported in all situations of concern.**

162. **The Security Council is encouraged to continue to call upon parties in situations of armed conflict listed in the annexes to my report to prepare concrete time-bound action plans to halt the recruitment and use of children and other violations and abuses committed against children for which they are cited, including the killing and maiming of children, rape and other grave sexual violence, abductions, attacks against schools and hospitals and denial of humanitarian access to children, in violation of international obligations applicable to them, and to expand the call for action plans to all situations of concern.**

163. **I welcome the Security Council's continuing consideration of effective targeted measures against parties to armed conflict who continue to systematically commit grave violations against children in armed conflict in defiance of recommendations by the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict and of Council resolutions. The Security Council should consider a range of measures, including a ban on the export or supply of arms, a ban on military assistance, the imposition of travel restrictions on leaders, their exclusion from any governance structures and amnesty provisions, and restriction of the flow of financial resources to the parties concerned.**

164. **The Security Council is encouraged to empower its Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict to recommend to the Council the imposition of targeted measures, and to monitor the implementation of such measures, on parties to armed conflict who commit grave violations against children in all situations of concern listed in the annexes to my report.**

165. **It is recommended that all future peacekeeping missions and relevant political missions include within their mandates child protection advisers, as appropriate, to strengthen monitoring and reporting and provide timely and accurate information for prompt advocacy and response for the protection of children affected by armed conflict in those situations.**

166. **Member States concerned should take effective action to bring to justice individuals responsible for the recruitment and use of children and other grave violations against children through national justice systems. The Security Council is encouraged to refer to the International Criminal Court, for investigation and prosecution, violations against children in armed conflict that fall within its jurisdiction.**

167. **Member States concerned should coordinate with my Special Representative on her engagement with non-State parties to ensure the broad and effective protection of children exposed to situations of concern.**

168. **States parties to the Convention on the Rights of the Child are encouraged to take measures to support the recommendations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child; to strengthen national and international measures for the prevention of recruitment of children into armed forces or armed groups and their use in hostilities, in particular by signing and ratifying the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict and enacting legislation that explicitly prohibits the recruitment of children into armed forces/groups and their use in hostilities; to submit reports under the Optional Protocol to the Committee on the Rights of the Child; and to exercise extraterritorial jurisdiction in order to strengthen the international protection of children against recruitment.**

169. **Member States are urged to work towards the implementation of a comprehensive strategy on assistance and support to victims of sexual exploitation and abuse by United Nations staff and related personnel, thereby enabling children who are victims of or born as a result of such abuse to receive much-needed support.**

170. **Adequate resources and funding need to be made available by donors to national Governments, the United Nations and partners to support the rehabilitation and reintegration of all children who have been associated with armed forces or armed groups, including relevant and effective programmatic action that reinforces such efforts, while ensuring their long-term sustainability and viability.**

171. **Member States are urged to address immediately the grave humanitarian, human rights and development consequences of cluster munitions. To that end, Member States are encouraged to conclude a binding instrument that prohibits the use, development, production, stockpiling and transfer of cluster munitions that cause unacceptable harm to civilians; requires the destruction of current stockpiles of those munitions; and provides for clearance, risk education and other risk-mitigation activities, victim support, assistance and cooperation, and compliance and transparency measures.**

VII. Annexed lists[5]

172. The present report contains two annexes.[6] Annex I lists parties that recruit or use children in situations of armed conflict on the agenda of the Security Council, bearing in mind other grave violations and abuses committed against children. Annex II lists parties that recruit or use children either in situations of armed conflict not on the agenda of the Security Council or in other situations of concern, also bearing in mind other grave violations and abuses committed against children.

173. It should be noted that the annexes do not list countries as such. The purpose of the annexed lists is to identify particular parties to conflict that are responsible

[5] Pursuant to Security Council resolution 1612 (2005), the present report is guided by criteria for determining the existence of an armed conflict found in international humanitarian law and international jurisprudence. Reference to a situation of concern is not a legal determination, and reference to a non-State party does not affect its legal status.

[6] The parties are listed in alphabetical order in the annexes.

for specific grave violations against children. In this respect, the names of countries are referred to only in order to indicate the locations or situations where offending parties are committing the violations in question.

Annex I

List of parties that recruit or use children in situations of armed conflict on the agenda of the Security Council, bearing in mind other violations and abuses committed against children

Parties in Afghanistan

Taliban Forces

This party has also been responsible for the killing and maiming of children and attacks against schools in the reporting period.

Parties in Burundi

Parti de libération du peuple hutu (Palipehutu)-Forces nationales pour la libération (FNL) — Agathon Rwasa

This party has also been responsible for killing and maiming and committing rape and other grave sexual violence against children in the reporting period.

Parties in the Central African Republic

1. Armée populaire pour la restauration de la Republique et de la démocratie (APRD)

This party has also been responsible for committing rape and other grave sexual violence against children in the reporting period.

2. Forces démocratiques pour la rassemblement (UFDR)

This party has also been responsible for the killing and maiming of children and attacks against schools in the reporting period.

3. Forces démocratiques populaire de Centrafrique (FDPC)

This party has also been responsible for committing rape and other grave sexual violence against children in the reporting period.

Parties in the Democratic Republic of the Congo

1. Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo (FARDC)

This party has also been responsible for killing and maiming, abductions and committing rape and other grave sexual violence against children in the reporting period.

2. Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda (FDLR)

This party has also been responsible for killing and maiming, abductions and committing rape and other grave sexual violence against children in the reporting period.

3. Front des nationalistes et integrationalistes (FNI)

This party has also been responsible for the abduction of children in the reporting period.

4. Front de résistance patriotique en Ituri (FRPI)

This party has also been responsible for the abduction of children in the reporting period.

5. Mai-Mai groups in North and South Kivu, Maniema and Katanga who have not integrated into FARDC

This party has also been responsible for the abduction of children in the reporting period.

6. Mouvement révolutionnaire congolais (MRC)

This party has also been responsible for the abduction of children in the reporting period.

7. Non-integrated FARDC brigades loyal to rebel leader Laurent Nkunda

This party has also been responsible for killing and maiming, abductions and committing rape and other grave sexual violence against children in the reporting period.

Parties in Myanmar

1. Democratic Karen Buddhist Army (DKBA)
2. Karen National Union-Karen National Liberation Army Peace Council
3. Kachin Independence Army (KIA)
4. Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA)
5. Karenni Army (KA)
6. Karenni National People's Liberation Front (KNPLF)
7. Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army
8. Shan State Army-South (SSA-S)
9. Tatmadaw Kyi

This party has also been responsible for the killing and maiming and denial of humanitarian access to children in the reporting period.

10. United Wa State Army (UWSA)

Parties in Nepal

Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist (CPN-M)

This party has also been responsible for abducting children in the reporting period.

Parties in Somalia

1. Remnants of the former Union of the Islamic Courts (UIC)

This party has also been responsible for the killing and maiming of children in the reporting period.

2. Transitional Federal Government (TFG)

This party has also been responsible for killing and maiming, committing rape and other grave sexual violence, attacks on schools and hospitals and denial of humanitarian access to children in the reporting period.

Parties in Southern Sudan

1. Parties under the control of the Government of the Sudan

(a) South Sudan Defence Forces, including the forces of Major-General Gabriel Tang Ginyi

This party has also been responsible for killing and maiming and committing rape and other grave sexual violence against children in the reporting period.

(b) Sudan. Armed Forces (SAF)

This party has also been responsible for committing rape and other grave sexual violence against children in the reporting period.

2. Parties under the control of the Government of Southern Sudan

(a) Pibor Defence Forces

This party has also been responsible for killing and maiming and committing rape and other grave sexual violence against children in the reporting period.

(b) Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA)

This party has also been responsible for committing rape and other grave sexual violence against children in the reporting period.

Parties in Darfur

1. Parties under the control of the Government of the Sudan

(a) Chadian opposition groups

This party has also been responsible for killing and maiming and committing rape and other grave sexual violence against children in the reporting period.

(b) Darfur Government supporting militias called the Janjaweed

This party has also been responsible for killing and maiming, committing rape and other grave sexual violence, attacks on schools and hospitals and denial of humanitarian access to children in the reporting period.

(c) Police Forces, including the Central Reserve Police

This party has also been responsible for killing and maiming and committing rape and other grave sexual violence against children in the reporting period.

(d) Popular Defence Forces

This party has also been responsible for killing and maiming and committing rape and other grave sexual violence against children in the reporting period.

(e) Sudan Armed Forces (SAF)

This party has also been responsible for killing and maiming, committing rape and other grave sexual violence, attacks on schools and hospitals and denial of humanitarian access to children in the reporting period.

2. Former rebel parties who have accepted the Darfur Peace Agreement

(a) Justice and Equality Movement (Peace Wing)

This party has also been responsible for killing and maiming and committing rape and other grave sexual violence against children in the reporting period.

(b) Sudan Liberation Army (SLA)/Abu Gasim

This party has also been responsible for killing and maiming and committing rape and other grave sexual violence against children in the reporting period.

(c) Sudan Liberation Army (SLA)/Free Will

This party has also been responsible for killing and maiming and committing rape and other grave sexual violence against children in the reporting period.

(d) Sudan Liberation Army (SLA)/Minni Minnawi

This party has also been responsible for killing and maiming and committing rape and other grave sexual violence against children in the reporting period.

3. Rebel parties who have rejected the Darfur Peace Agreement

(a) Sudan Liberation Army (SLA)/Abdul Wahid

This party has also been responsible for the abduction of children in the reporting period.

(b) Sudan Liberation Army (SLA)/Shafi

This party has also been responsible for the abduction of children in the reporting period.

Annex II

List of parties that recruit or use children in situations of armed conflict not on the agenda of the Security Council, or in other situations of concern, bearing in mind other violations and abuses committed against children

Parties in Chad

1. Chadian National Army

This party has also been responsible for killing and maiming and committing rape and other grave sexual violence against children in the reporting period.

2. Chadian self-defence groups operating in Ade, Dogdore and Mogororo

3. Government of the Sudan-backed militias, known as the Janjaweed

4. Sudanese armed groups backed by the Government of Chad

   (a) Justice and Equality Movement

   (b) Sudan Liberation Army — G19 faction

5. Union des forces pour la démocratie et le développement (UFDD)

This party has also been responsible for committing rape and other grave sexual violence against children.

Parties in Colombia

1. Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN)

This party has also been responsible for killing and maiming, abductions, committing rape and other grave sexual violence and the denial of humanitarian access to children in the reporting period.

2. Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP)

This party has also been responsible for killing and maiming, abductions, committing rape and other grave sexual violence and the denial of humanitarian access to children in the reporting period.

3. Illegal armed groups not participating in the demobilization process

   (a) Autodefensas Campesinas del Casanare

   (b) Frente Cacique Pipinta

Parties in the Philippines

1. Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG)

2. Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF)

3. New People's Army (NPA)

Parties in Sri Lanka

1. Karuna faction

This party has also been responsible for killing and maiming and abductions of children in the reporting period.

2. Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE)

This party has also been responsible for killing and maiming and abductions of children in the reporting period.

Parties in Uganda

1. Lord's Resistance Army (LRA)

This party has also been responsible for committing rape and other grave sexual violence against children in the reporting period.

2. Government armed forces and defence units

(a) Local defence units

This party has also been responsible for committing rape and other grave sexual violence against children in the reporting period.

(b) Uganda People's Defence Forces (UPDF)

This party has also been responsible for committing rape and other grave sexual violence against children in the reporting period.